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THE POEMS

OF

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOLUME VI

A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY
ASTROPHEL, AND OTHER POEMS
A CHANNEL PASSAGE
AND OTHER POEMS

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A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY
AND OTHER POEMS

A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY

TO

THEODORE WATTS

I

THE SEABOARD

The sea is at ebb, and the sound of her utmost word
Is soft as the least wave's lapse in a still small reach.
From bay into bay, on quest of a goal deferred,
From headland ever to headland and breach to breach
Where earth gives ear to the message that all days preach
With changes of gladness and sadness that cheer and chide,
The lone way lures me along by a chance untried
That haply, if hope dissolve not and faith be whole,
Not all for nought shall I seek, with a dream for guide,
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The trackless ways are untravelled of sail or bird;
The hoar wave hardly recedes from the soundless beach.
The silence of instant noon goes nigh to be heard,
The viewless void to be visible: all and each,
A closure of calm no clamour of storm can breach

Concludes and confines and absorbs them on either
side,
All forces of light and of life and the live world's
pride.
Sands hardly ruffled of ripples that hardly roll
Seem ever to show as in reach of a swift brief stride
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The waves are a joy to the seamew, the meads to
the herd,
And a joy to the heart is a goal that it may not reach.
No sense that for ever the limits of sense engird,
No hearing or sight that is vassal to form or speech,
Learns ever the secret that shadow and silence teach,
Hears ever the notes that or ever they swell subside,
Sees ever the light that lights not the loud world's
tide,
Clasps ever the cause of the lifelong scheme's con-
trol
Wherethrough we pursue, till the waters of life be
dried.
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

Friend, what have we sought or seek we, whate'er
betide,
Though the seaboard shift its mark from afar de-
scried,
But aims whence ever anew shall arise the soul?
Love, thought, song, life, but show for a glimpse and
hide
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

II

A HAVEN

East and north a waste of waters, south and west
Lonelier lands than dreams in sleep would feign
to be,
When the soul goes forth on travel, and is prest
Round and compassed in with clouds that flash and
flee.
Dells without a streamlet, downs without a tree,
Cirques of hollow cliff that crumble, give their guest
Little hope, till hard at hand he pause, to see
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side
nest.

Many a lone long mile, by many a headland's crest,
Down by many a garden dear to bird and bee,
Up by many a sea-down's bare and breezy breast,
Winds the sandy strait of road where flowers run
free.
Here along the deep steep lanes by field and lea
Knights have carolled, pilgrims chanted, on their
quest,
Haply, ere a roof rose toward the bleak strand's lee,
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side
nest.

Are the wild lands cursed perchance of time, or blest,
Sad with fear or glad with comfort of the sea?
Are the ruinous towers of churches fallen on rest
Watched of wanderers woful now, glad once as we,
When the night has all men's eyes and hearts in fee,
When the soul bows down dethroned and dispossest?
Yet must peace keep guard, by day's and night's
decree,
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side
nest.

Friend, the lonely land is bright for you and me
All its wild ways through: but this methinks is best,
Here to watch how kindly time and change agree
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side
nest.

III

ON A COUNTRY ROAD

Along these low pleached lanes, on such a day,
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,
With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild way,
And heart still hovering o'er a song begun,
And smile that warmed the world with benison.
Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,
Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime
Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.
Because thy passage once made warm this clime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,
She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun
Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array
For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun
Things past for dreams of better to be won,
Through many a century since thy funeral chime
Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime
To have spared not thee for very love or shame;
And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,
Meseems, might bring us face to face with one
Whom seeing we could not but give thanks, and
pray
For England's love our father and her son
To speak with us as once in days long done
With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,
Who knew not as we know the soul sublime
That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.
Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,
Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime
Names once beloved; but, seeing the sun the same,
As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

IV

THE MILL GARDEN

Stately stand the sunflowers, glowing down the garden-side,
Ranged in royal rank arow along the warm grey wall,
Whence their deep disks burn at rich midnoon afire with pride,
Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams, and the tall
Sceptral stems bore stars whose reign endures, not flowers that fall.
Lowlier laughs and basks the kindlier flower of homelier fame,
Held by love the sweeter that it blooms in Shakespeare's name,
Fragrant yet as though his hand had touched and made it thrill,
Like the whole world's heart, with warm new life and gladdening flame.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the mill!

Softlier here the flower-soft feet of refluent seasons glide,
Lightlier breathes the long low note of change's gentler call.

Wind and storm and landslip feed the lone sea's
gulf outside,
Half a seamew's first flight hence; but scarce may
these appal
Peace, whose perfect seal is set for signet here on
all.
Steep and deep and sterile, under fields no plough
can tame,
Dip the cliffs full-fledged with poppies red as love or
shame,
Wide wan daisies bleak and bold, or herbage harsh
and chill;
Here the full clove pinks and wallflowers crown the
love they claim.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the
mill!

All the place breathes low, but not for fear lest ill
betide,
Soft as roses answering roses, or a dove's recall.
Little heeds it how the seaward banks may stoop and
slide,
How the winds and years may hold all outer things
in thrall,
How their wrath may work on hoar church tower
and boundary wall.
Far and wide the waste and ravin of their rule pro-
claim
Change alone the changeless lord of things, alone
the same:
Here a flower is stronger than the winds that work
their will,

Or the years that wing their way through darkness
toward their aim.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the
mill!

Friend, the home that smiled us welcome hither
when we came,
When we pass again with summer, surely should
reclaim
Somewhat given of heart's thanksgiving more than
words fulfil—
More than song, were song more sweet than all but
love, might frame.
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the
mill!

V

A SEA-MARK

Rains have left the sea-banks ill to climb:
Waveward sinks the loosening seaboard's floor:
Half the sliding cliffs are mire and slime.
Earth, a fruit rain-rotted to the core,
Drops dissolving down in flakes, that pour
Dense as gouts from eaves grown foul with grime.
One sole rock which years that scathe not score
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Time were even as even the rainiest clime,
Life were even as even this lapsing shore,
Might not aught outlive their trustless prime:
Vainly fear would wail or hope implore,
Vainly grief revile or love adore
Seasons clothed in sunshine, rain, or rime.
Now for me one comfort held in store
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Once, by fate's default or chance's crime,
Each apart, our burdens each we bore;
Heard, in monotones like bells that chime,
Chime the sounds of sorrows, float and soar

Joy's full carols, near or far before;
Heard not yet across the alternate rhyme
Time's tongue tell what sign set fast of yore
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Friend, the sign we knew not heretofore
Towers in sight here present and sublime.
Faith in faith established evermore
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

VI

THE CLIFFSIDE PATH

Seaward goes the sun, and homeward by the down
We, before the night upon his grave be sealed.
Low behind us lies the bright steep murmuring
town,
High before us heaves the steep rough silent field.
Breach by ghastlier breach, the cliffs collapsing
yield:
Half the path is broken, half the banks divide;
Flawed and crumbled, riven and rent, they cleave
and slide
Toward the ridged and wrinkled waste of girdling
sand
Deep beneath, whose furrows tell how far and wide
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Star by star on the unsunned waters twiring down.
Golden spear-points glance against a silver shield.
Over banks and bents, across the headland's crown,
As by pulse of gradual plumes through twilight
wheeled,
Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the weald.

Moor and copse and fallow, near or far descried,
Feel the mild wings move, and gladden where they glide:
Silence, uttering love that all things understand,
Bids the quiet fields forget that hard beside
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Yet may sight, ere all the hoar soft shade grow brown,
Hardly reckon half the rifts and rents unhealed
Where the scarred cliffs downward sundering drive and drown,
Hewn as if with stroke of swords in tempest steeled,
Wielded as the night's will and the wind's may wield.
Crowned and zoned in vain with flowers of autumn-tide,
Soon the blasts shall break them, soon the waters hide;
Soon, where late we stood, shall no man ever stand.
Life and love seek harbourage on the landward side:
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Friend, though man be less than these, for all his pride,
Yet, for all his weakness, shall not hope abide?
Wind and change can wreck but life and waste but land:
Truth and trust are sure, though here till all subside
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

VII

IN THE WATER

The sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the joy of her waking is rolled
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the wastes of the wild wide shore.
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward: if dawn in her east be acold,
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle the life that is kindled before,
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her kisses to bless as of yore?
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in the sky, neither fettered nor free,
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter: and fain would the twain of us be
Where lightly the wave yearns forward from under the curve of the deep dawn's dome,
And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of the glory thereof and the glee,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in: the
past is a tale that is told,
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep,
with a blessing in store.
As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of
limbs that the waters enfold
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though the
burden it quits were sore,
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are
absorbed in the life they adore—
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the
forehead, and bends not the knee—
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the
laws that atone and agree,
In the measureless music of things, in the fervour of
forces that rest or that roam,
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and
as you after me
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply
the heart of a man may be bold
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that
saith to the son she bore,
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit
the breath in thy lips from of old?
Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength,
and thy foolishness learn of my lore?
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or
made not the might of thy gladness more?

And surely his heart should answer, The light of the love of my life is in thee.
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not fairer, the wind is not blither than she:
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of her bays that I crossed, of her cliffs that I clomb,
Till now that the twain of us here, in desire of the dawn and in trust of the sea,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Friend, earth is a harbour of refuge for winter, a covert whereunder to flee
When day is the vassal of night, and the strength of the hosts of her mightier than he;
But here is the presence adored of me, here my desire is at rest and at home.
There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there are ways to be trodden and ridden: but we
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

VIII

THE SUNBOWS

Spray of song that springs in April, light of love that laughs through May,
Live and die and live for ever: nought of all things far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like fire away.
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter that they were;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old was there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids perpetual memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts which seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn to-day:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through radiant air,

Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind
that works in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight
may wellnigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colours rain from heaven,
though this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined
ray by ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till
eyes may hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed
from bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter head-
lands keen and bare
Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal
memory watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance
the midnight spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight
in her snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea, saith dawn,
though night say nay:
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles every-
where
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would yet
the living fare.

A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY

All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward, who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

IX

ON THE VERGE

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end. Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a world-wide shore's control:
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits: these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.
Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and scarce they seem
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the brief noon's breath and beam.
Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of bells that toll,
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed and made us whole,
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor what were we.
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering whisper stole
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume the brand,
Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,

What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the scroll
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or doom of dole.
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom with venturous glee,
Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall alway be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

A NEW-YEAR ODE

To Victor Hugo

I

Twice twelve times have the springs of years refilled
Their fountains from the river-head of time
Since by the green sea's marge, ere autumn chilled
Waters and woods with sense of changing clime,
A great light rose upon my soul, and thrilled
My spirit of sense with sense of spheres in chime,
Sound as of song wherewith a God would build
Towers that no force of conquering war might climb.
Wind shook the glimmering sea
Even as my soul in me
Was stirred with breath of mastery more sublime,
Uplift and borne along
More thunderous tides of song,
Where wave rang back to wave more rapturous rhyme
And world on world flashed lordlier light
Than ever lit the wandering ways of ships by night.

II

The spirit of God, whose breath of life is song,
Moved, though his word was human, on the face
Of those deep waters of the soul, too long
Dumb, dark, and cold, that waited for the grace

Wherewith day kindles heaven: and as some throng
Of quiring wings fills full some lone chill place
With sudden rush of life and joy, more strong
Than death or sorrow or all night's darkling race,
So was my heart, that heard
All heaven in each deep word,
Filled full with light of thought, and waxed apace
Itself more wide and deep,
To take that gift and keep
And cherish while my days fulfilled their space
A record wide as earth and sea,
The Legend writ of Ages past and yet to be.

III

As high the chant of Paradise and Hell
Rose, when the soul of Milton gave it wings;
As wide the sweep of Shakespeare's empire fell,
When life had bared for him her secret springs;
But not his various soul might range and dwell
Amid the mysteries of the founts of things;
Nor Milton's range of rule so far might swell
Across the kingdoms of forgotten kings.
Men, centuries, nations, time,
Life, death, love, trust, and crime,
Rang record through the change of smitten strings
That felt an exile's hand
Sound hope for every land
More loud than storm's cloud-sundering trumpet rings,
And bid strong death for judgment rise,
And life bow down for judgment of his awless eyes.

IV

And death, soul-stricken in his strength, resigned
The keeping of the sepulchres to song;
And life was humbled, and his height of mind
Brought lower than lies a grave-stone fallen along;
And like a ghost and like a God mankind
Rose clad with light and darkness; weak and strong,
Clean and unclean, with eyes afire and blind,
Wounded and whole, fast bound with cord and thong,
Free; fair and foul, sin-stained,
And sinless; crowned and chained;
Fleet-limbed, and halting all his lifetime long;
Glad of deep shame, and sad
For shame's sake; wise, and mad;
Girt round with love and hate of right and wrong;
Armed and disarmed for sleep and strife;
Proud, and sore fear made havoc of his pride of life.

V

Shadows and shapes of fable and storied sooth
Rose glorious as with gleam of gold unpriced;
Eve, clothed with heavenly nakedness and youth
That matched the morning's; Cain, self-sacrificed
On crime's first altar: legends wise as truth,
And truth in legends deep embalmed and spiced;
The stars that saw the starlike eyes of Ruth,
The grave that heard the clarion call of Christ.

And higher than sorrow and mirth
The heavenly song of earth
Sprang, in such notes as might have well sufficed
To still the storms of time
And sin's contentious clime
With peace renewed of life reparadised:
Earth, scarred not yet with temporal scars;
Goddess of gods, our mother, chosen among the stars.

VI

Earth fair as heaven, ere change and time set odds
Between them, light and darkness know not when,
And fear, grown strong through panic periods,
Crouched, a crowned worm, in faith's Lernean fen,
And love lay bound, and hope was scourged with rods,
And death cried out from desert and from den,
Seeing all the heaven above him dark with gods
And all the world about him marred of men.
Cities that nought might purge
Save the sea's whelming surge
From all the pent pollutions in their pen
Deep death drank down, and wrought,
With wreck of all things, nought,
That none might live of all their names again,
Nor aught of all whose life is breath
Serve any God whose likeness was not like to death.

VII

Till by the lips and eyes of one live nation
The blind mute world found grace to see and speak,

And light watched rise a more divine creation
At that more godlike utterance of the Greek,
Let there be freedom. Kings whose orient station
Made pale the morn, and all her presage bleak,
Girt each with strengths of all his generation,
Dim tribes of shamefaced soul and sun-swart cheek,
Twice, urged with one desire,
Son following hard on sire,
With all the wrath of all a world to wreak,
And all the rage of night
Afire against the light
Whose weakness makes her strong-winged empire weak,
Stood up to unsay that saying, and fell
Too far for song, though song were thousand-tongued, to tell.

VIII

From those deep echoes of the loud Ægean
That rolled response whereat false fear was chid
By songs of joy sublime and Sophoclean,
Fresh notes reverberate westward rose to bid
All wearier times take comfort from the pæan
That tells the night what deeds the sunrise did,
Even till the lawns and torrents Pyrenean
Ring answer from the records of the Cid.
But never force of fountains
From sunniest hearts of mountains
Wherein the soul of hidden June was hid

Poured forth so pure and strong
Springs of reiterate song,
Loud as the streams his fame was reared amid,
More sweet than flowers they feed, and fair
With grace of lordlier sunshine and more lambent air.

IX

A star more prosperous than the storm-clothed east's
Clothed all the warm south-west with light like spring's,
When hands of strong men spread the wolves their feasts
And from snake-spirited princes plucked the stings;
Ere earth, grown all one den of hurtling beasts,
Had for her sunshine and her watersprings
The fire of hell that warmed the hearts of priests,
The wells of blood that slaked the lips of kings.
The shadow of night made stone
Stood populous and alone,
Dense with its dead and loathed of living things
That draw not life from death,
And as with hell's own breath
And clangour of immitigable wings
Vexed the fair face of Paris, made
Foul in its murderous imminence of sound and shade.

X

And all these things were parcels of the vision
That moved a cloud before his eyes, or stood
A tower half shattered by the strong collision
Of spirit and spirit, of evil gods with good;

A ruinous wall rent through with grim division,
Where time had marked his every monstrous mood
Of scorn and strength and pride and self-derision:
The Tower of Things, that felt upon it brood
Night, and about it cast
The storm of all the past
Now mute and forceless as a fire subdued:
Yet through the rifted years
And centuries veiled with tears
And ages as with very death imbrued
Freedom, whence hope and faith grow strong,
Smiles, and firm love sustains the indissoluble song.

XI

Above the cloudy coil of days deceased,
Its might of flight, with mists and storms beset,
Burns heavenward, as with heart and hope increased,
For all the change of tempests, all the fret
Of frost or fire, keen fraud or force released,
Wherewith the world once wasted knows not yet
If evil or good lit all the darkling east
From the ardent moon of sovereign Mahomet.
Sublime in work and will
The song sublimer still
Salutes him, ere the splendour shrink and set;
Then with imperious eye
And wing that sounds the sky
Soars and sees risen as ghosts in concourse met
The old world's seven elder wonders, firm
As dust and fixed as shadows, weaker than the worm.

XII

High witness borne of knights high-souled and hoary
Before death's face and empire's rings and glows
Even from the dust their life poured forth left gory,
As the eagle's cry rings after from the snows
Supreme rebuke of shame clothed round with glory
And hosts whose track the false crowned eagle shows;
More loud than sounds through stormiest song and story
The laugh of slayers whose names the sea-wind knows;
More loud than peals on land
In many a red wet hand
The clash of gold and cymbals as they close;
Loud as the blast that meets
The might of marshalled fleets
And sheds it into shipwreck, like a rose
Blown from a child's light grasp in sign
That earth's high lords are lords not over breeze and brine.

XIII

Above the dust and mire of man's dejection
The wide-winged spirit of song resurgent sees
His wingless and long-labouring resurrection
Up the arduous heaven, by sore and strange degrees,
Mount, and with splendour of the soul's reflection
Strike heaven's dark sovereign down upon his knees,

Pale in the light of orient insurrection,
And dumb before the almightier lord's decrees
Who bade him be of yore,
Who bids him be no more:
And all earth's heart is quickened as the sea's,
Even as when sunrise burns
The very sea's heart yearns
That heard not on the midnight-walking breeze
The wail that woke with evensong
From hearts of poor folk watching all the darkness long.

XIV

Dawn and the beams of sunbright song illume
Love, with strange children at her piteous breast,
By grace of weakness from the grave-mouthed gloom
Plucked, and by mercy lulled to living rest,
Soft as the nursling's nigh the grandsire's tomb
That fell on sleep, a bird of rifled nest;
Soft as the lips whose smile unsaid the doom
That gave their sire to violent death's arrest.
Even for such love's sake strong,
Wrath fires the inveterate song
That bids hell gape for one whose bland mouth blest
All slayers and liars that sighed
Prayer as they slew and lied
Till blood had clothed his priesthood as a vest,
And hears, though darkness yet be dumb,
The silence of the trumpet of the wrath to come.

XV

Nor lacked these lights of constellated age
A star among them fed with life more dire,
Lit with his blood-red fame, whose withering rage
Made earth for heaven's sake one funereal pyre
And life in faith's name one appointed stage
For death to purge the souls of men with fire.
Heaven, earth, and hell on one thrice tragic page
Mixed all their light and darkness: one man's lyre
Gave all their echoes voice;
Bade rose-cheeked love rejoice,
And cold-lipped craft with ravenous fear conspire,
And fire-eyed faith smite hope
Dead, seeing enthroned as Pope
And crowned of heaven on earth at hell's desire
Sin, called by death's incestuous name
Borgia: the world that heard it flushed and quailed
with shame.

XVI

Another year, and hope triumphant heard
The consummating sound of song that spake
Conclusion to the multitudinous word
Whose expectation held her spirit awake
Till full delight for twice twelve years deferred
Bade all souls entering eat and drink, and take
A third time comfort given them, that the third
Might heap the measure up of twain, and make
The sinking year sublime
Among all sons of time
And fair in all men's memories for his sake.

Each thought of ours became
Fire, kindling from his flame,
And music widening in his wide song's wake.
Yea, and the world bore witness here
How great a light was risen upon this darkening year.

XVII

It was the dawn of winter: sword in sheath,
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.
South, east, and north, our skies were all blown bare,
But westward over glimmering holt and heath
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more fair
Than ever dream of truth
Showed earth in time's keen youth
When men with angels communed unaware.
Above the sun's head, now
Veiled even to the ardent brow,
Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were
As a bird's poised for vehement flight,
Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar grey light.

XVIII

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,
But feathered thick with flame that streaked and lined

Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,
From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined
Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head
Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind
Of doom or benediction to be shed
From passage of his presence. Far behind,
Even while they seemed to close,
Stoop, and take flight, arose
Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may find
In light or night supreme
Of vision or of dream,
Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,
Heaven, manifest in manifold
Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

XIX

And where the fine gold faded all the sky
Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,
Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly
Of clouds suspense in rapture and repose,
With large live petals, broad as love bids lie
Full open when the sun salutes the rose,
And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most high
Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close
With ruinous roseleaves whirled
About their wan chill world,
Through wind-worn bowers that now no music knows,

Spoil of the dim dusk year
Whose utter night is near,
And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows;
Till east and west were fire and light,
As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming night.

XX

The highways paced of men that toil or play,
The byways known of none but lonely feet,
Were paven of purple woven of night and day
With hands that met as hands of friends might meet—
As though night's were not lifted up to slay
And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more sweet
Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay
On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,
That watched far above
Life's very rose of love
Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,
And fill all heaven and earth
Full as with fires of birth
Whence time should feed his years with light and heat:
Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong
Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

XXI

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit
With love and loving wonder: song that glowed

Through cloud and change on souls that knew
not it
And hearts that wist not whence their comfort
flowed,
Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,
Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.
Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit,
Of all that passed along that sunset road
Westward, no brow so drear,
No eye so dull of cheer,
No face so mean whereon that light abode,
But as with alien pride
Strange godhead glorified
Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that
showed
The likeness of its own life wrought
By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

XXII

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,
Nor only men that paced that sunward way
To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by
Unblest or unillumined: none might say,
Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,
That all too low for all that grace it lay:
The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,
The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets
play,
Were filled from heaven above
With light like fire of love,
With flames and colours like a dawn in May,

As hearts that lowlier live
With light of thoughts that give
Light from the depth of souls more deep than they
Through song's or story's kindling scroll,
The splendour of the shadow that reveals the soul.

XXIII

For, when such light is in the world, we share,
All of us, all the rays thereof that shine:
Its presence is alive in the unseen air,
Its fire within our veins as quickening wine;
A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,
Known or not known of all men for divine.
Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair
All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,
Priest, prophet, seer and sage,
Lord of a subject age
That bears thy seal upon it for a sign;
Whose name shall be thy name,
Whose light thy light of fame,
The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine
Whose record through all years to be
Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare thee.

XXIV

O mystery, whence to one man's hand was given
Power upon all things of the spirit, and might
Whereby the veil of all the years was riven
And naked stood the secret soul of night!

O marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,
That shows at last wrong reconciled with right
By death divine of evil and sin forgiven!
O light of song, whose fire is perfect light!
No speech, no voice, no thought,
No love, avails us aught
For service of thanksgiving in his sight
Who hath given us all for ever
Such gifts that man gave never
So many and great since first Time's wings took flight.
Man may not praise a spirit above
Man's: life and death shall praise him: we can only love.

XXV

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,
Death, self-abased before a power more high,
Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,
That not till time be dead shall this man die.
Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure;
Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.
A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,
An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.
Awe sweet as love and proud
As fame, though hushed and bowed,
Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by:
All crowns before his crown
Triumphantly bow down,
For pride that one more great than all draws nigh
All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,
One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering name.

NOTES

st.	v.	
V.	3.	La Légende des Siècles: Le Sacre de la Femme.
	4.	La Conscience.
	7.	Booz endormi.
	8.	Première rencontre du Christ avec le tombeau.
	9.	La Terre: Hymne.
VI.	3.	Les Temps Paniques.
	9.	La Ville Disparue.
VII.		Les Trois Cents.
VIII.	1.	Le Détroit de l'Euripe: La Chanson de Sophocle à Salamine.
	7.	Le Romancero du Cid.
IX.	3.	Le Petit Roi de Galice.
	5.	Le Jour des Rois.
	9.	Montfaucon.
X.		La vision d'où est sorti ce livre.
XI.	9.	L'an neuf de l'Hégire.
	12.	Les sept merveilles du monde.
XII.	1.	Les quatre jours d'Elciis.
	4.	Le Régiment du baron Madruce.
	7.	La Chanson des Aventuriers de la Mer.
	9.	Les Reîtres.
	12.	La Rose de l'Infante.
XIII.	1.	Le Satyre.
	12.	Les paysans au bord de la mer.
XIV.	1.	Les pauvres gens.
	5.	Petit Paul.
	7.	Guerre Civile.
	9.	La Vision de Dante.
	15.	La Trompette du Jugement.
XV.		Torquemada (1882).
XVI.		La Légende des Siècles: tome cinquième et dernier (1883).
XVII.		November 25, 1883.

LINES ON THE MONUMENT OF GIUSEPPE MAZZINI

Italia, mother of the souls of men,
Mother divine,
Of all that served thee best with sword or pen
All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best
Before thee stands;
The head most high, the heart found faithfullest,
The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,
The soul, we know,
Now sits on high where Alighieri sits
With Angelo.

Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech
Enough to say
What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,
No words can weigh.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son,
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this one.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast sealed eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise.

And all the world was bright with her through him:
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished: hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt, and are not: he is here,
The sunlike man.

City superb that hadst Columbus first
For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nurst
This mightier one.

Glory be his for ever, while his land
Lives and is free,
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
He bade her be.

GIUSEPPE MAZZINI

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame,
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold
Mazzini's name.

LES CASQUETS

From the depths of the waters that lighten and darken
With change everlasting of life and of death,
Where hardly by noon if the lulled ear hearken
It hears the sea's as a tired child's breath,
Where hardly by night if an eye dare scan it
The storm lets shipwreck be seen or heard,
As the reefs to the waves and the foam to the granite
Respond one merciless word,

Sheer seen and far, in the sea's live heaven,
A seamew's flight from the wild sweet land,
White-plumed with foam if the wind wake, seven
Black helms as of warriors that stir not stand.
From the depths that abide and the waves that environ
Seven rocks rear heads that the midnight masks;
And the strokes of the swords of the storm are as iron
On the steel of the wave-worn casques.

Be night's dark word as the word of a wizard,
Be the word of dawn as a god's glad word,
Like heads of the spirits of darkness visored
That see not for ever, nor ever have heard,

LES CASQUETS

These basnets, plumed as for fight or plumeless,
Crowned of the storm and by storm discrowned,
Keep ward of the lists where the dead lie tombless
And the tale of them is not found.

Nor eye may number nor hand may reckon
The tithes that are taken of life by the dark,
Or the ways of the path, if doom's hand beckon,
For the soul to fare as a helmless bark—
Fare forth on a way that no sign showeth,
Nor aught of its goal or of aught between
A path for her flight which no fowl knoweth,
Which the vulture's eye hath not seen.

Here still, though the wave and the wind seem lovers
Lulled half asleep by their own soft words,
A dream as of death in the sun's light hoyers,
And a sign in the motions and cries of the birds.
Dark auguries and keen from the sweet sea-swallows
Strike noon with a sense as of midnight's breath,
And the wing that flees and the wing that follows
Are as types of the wings of death.

For here, when the night roars round, and under
The white sea lightens and leaps like fire,
Acclaimed of storm and applauded in thunder,
Sits death on the throne of his crowned desire.
Yea, hardly the hand of the god might fashion
A seat more strong for his strength to take,
For the might of his heart and the pride of his passion
To rejoice in the wars they make.

When the heart in him brightens with blitheness of battle
And the depth of its thirst is fulfilled with strife,
And his ear with the ravage of bolts that rattle,
And the soul of death with the pride of life,
Till the darkness is loud with his dark thanksgiving
And wind and cloud are as chords of his hymn,
There is nought save death in the deep night living,
And the whole night worships him.

Heaven's height bows down to him, signed with his token,
And the sea's depth, moved as a heart that yearns,
Heaves up to him, strong as a heart half broken,
A heart that breaks in a prayer that burns.
Of cloud is the shrine of his worship moulded,
But the altar therein is of sea-shaped stone,
Whereon, with the strength of his wide wings folded,
Sits death in the dark, alone.

He hears the word of his servant spoken,
The word that the wind his servant saith;
Storm writes on the front of the night his token,
That the skies may seem to bow down to death.
But the clouds that stoop and the storms that minister
Serve but as thralls that fulfil their tasks;
And his seal is not set save here on the sinister
Crests reared of the crownless casques.

Nor flame nor plume of the storm that crowned
them
Gilds or quickens their stark black strength.
Life lightens and murmurs and laughs right round
them,
At peace with the noon's whole breadth and
length,
At one with the heart of the soft-souled heaven,
At one with the life of the kind wild land:
But its touch may unbrace not the strengths of the
seven
Casques hewn of the storm-wind's hand.

No touch may loosen the black braced helmlets
For the wild elves' heads of the wild waves
wrought.
As flowers on the sea are her small green realmlets,
Like heavens made out of a child's heart's thought;
But these as thorns of her desolate places,
Strong fangs that fasten and hold lives fast:
And the vizors are framed as for formless faces
That a dark dream sees go past.

Of fear and of fate are the frontlets fashioned,
And the heads behind them are dire and dumb.
When the heart of the darkness is scarce impas-
sioned,
Thrilled scarce with sense of the wrath to come,
They bear the sign from of old engraven,
Though peace be round them and strife seem far,
That here is none but the night-wind's haven,
With death for the harbour bar.

LES CASQUETS

Of the iron of doom are the casquets carven,
That never the rivets thereof should burst.
When the heart of the darkness is hunger-starven,
And the throats of the gulfs are agape for thirst,
And stars are as flowers that the wind bids wither,
And dawn is as hope struck dead by fear,
The rage of the ravenous night sets hither,
And the crown of her work is here.

All shores about and afar lie lonely,
But lonelier are these than the heart of grief,
These loose-linked rivets of rock, whence only
Strange life scarce gleams from the sheer main reef,
With a blind wan face in the wild wan morning,
With a live lit flame on its brows by night,
That the lost may lose not its word's mute warning
And the blind by its grace have sight.

Here, walled in with the wide waste water,
Grew the grace of a girl's lone life,
The sea's and the sea-wind's foster-daughter,
And peace was hers in the main mid strife.
For her were the rocks clothed round with thunder,
And the crests of them carved by the storm-smith's craft:
For her was the mid storm rent in sunder
As with passion that wailed and laughed.

For her the sunrise kindled and scattered
The red rose-leaflets of countless cloud:
For her the blasts of the springtide shattered
The strengths reluctant of waves back-bowed.

For her would winds in the mid sky levy
  Bright wars that hardly the night bade cease:
At noon, when sleep on the sea lies heavy,
    For her would the sun make peace.

Peace rose crowned with the dawn on golden
  Lit leagues of triumph that flamed and smiled:
Peace lay lulled in the moon-beholden
  Warm darkness making the world's heart mild.
For all the wide waves' troubles and treasons,
  One word only her soul's ear heard
Speak from stormless and storm-rent seasons,
    And nought save peace was the word.

All her life waxed large with the light of it,
  All her heart fed full on the sound:
Spirit and sense were exalted in sight of it,
  Compassed and girdled and clothed with it round
Sense was none but a strong still rapture,
  Spirit was none but a joy sublime,
Of strength to curb and of craft to capture
    The craft and the strength of Time.

Time lay bound as in painless prison
  There, closed in with a strait small space.
Never thereon as a strange light risen
  Change had unveiled for her grief's far face.
Three white walls flung out from the basement
  Girt the width of the world whereon
Gazing at night from her flame-lit casement
    She saw where the dark sea shone.

LES CASQUETS

Hardly the breadth of a few brief paces,
  Hardly the length of a strong man's stride,
The small court flower-lit with children's faces
  Scarce held scope for a bird to hide.
Yet here was a man's brood reared and hidden
  Between the rocks and the towers and the foam,
Where peril and pity and peace were bidden
    As guests to the same sure home.

Here would pity keep watch for peril,
  And surety comfort his heart with peace.
No flower save one, where the reefs lie sterile,
  Gave of the seed of its heart's increase.
Pity and surety and peace most lowly
  Were the root and the stem and the bloom of the
    flower:
And the light and the breath of the buds kept holy
    That maid's else blossomless bower.

With never a leaf but the seaweed's tangle,
  Never a bird's but the seamew's note,
It heard all round it the strong storms wrangle,
  Watched far past it the waste wrecks float.
But her soul was stilled by the sky's endurance,
  And her heart made glad with the sea's content;
And her faith waxed more in the sun's assurance
    For the winds that came and went.

Sweetness was brought for her forth of the bitter
  Sea's strength, and light of the deep sea's dark,
From where green lawns on Alderney glitter
  To the bastioned crags of the steeps of Sark.

These she knew from afar beholden,
And marvelled haply what life would be
On moors that sunset and dawn leave golden,
In dells that smile on the sea.

And forth she fared as a stout-souled rover,
For a brief blithe raid on the bounding brine:
And light winds ferried her light bark over
To the lone soft island of fair-limbed kine.
But the league-long length of its wild green border,
And the small bright streets of serene St. Anne,
Perplexed her sense with a strange disorder
At sight of the works of man.

The world was here, and the world's confusion,
And the dust of the wheels of revolving life,
Pain, labour, change, and the fierce illusion
Of strife more vain than the sea's old strife.
And her heart within her was vexed, and dizzy
The sense of her soul as a wheel that whirled:
She might not endure for a space that busy
Loud coil of the troublous world.

Too full, she said, was the world of trouble,
Too dense with noise of contentious things,
And shows less bright than the blithe foam's bubble
As home she fared on the smooth wind's wings.
For joy grows loftier in air more lonely,
Where only the sea's brood fain would be;
Where only the heart may receive in it only
The love of the heart of the sea.

A BALLAD OF SARK

High beyond the granite portal arched across
Like the gateway of some godlike giant's hold
Sweep and swell the billowy breasts of moor and moss
East and westward, and the dell their slopes enfold
Basks in purple, glows in green, exults in gold.
Glens that know the dove and fells that hear the lark
Fill with joy the rapturous island, as an ark
Full of spicery wrought from herb and flower and tree.
None would dream that grief even here may disembark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Rocks emblazoned like the mid shield's royal boss
Take the sun with all their blossom broad and bold.
None would dream that all this moorland's glow and gloss
Could be dark as tombs that strike the spirit acold
Even in eyes that opened here, and here behold
Now no sun relume from hope's belated spark
Any comfort, nor may ears of mourners hark
Though the ripe woods ring with golden-throated glee,
While the soul lies shattered, like a stranded bark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

A BALLAD OF SARK

Death and doom are they whose crested triumphs toss
On the proud plumed waves whence mourning notes are tolled.
Wail of perfect woe and moan for utter loss
Raise the bride-song through the graveyard on the wold
Where the bride-bed keeps the bridegroom fast in mould,
Where the bride, with death for priest and doom for clerk,
Hears for choir the throats of waves like wolves that bark,
Sore anhungered, off the drear Eperquerie,
Fain to spoil the strongholds of the strength of Sark
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Prince of storm and tempest, lord whose ways are dark,
Wind whose wings are spread for flight that none may mark,
Lightly dies the joy that lives by grace of thee.
Love through thee lies bleeding, hope lies cold and stark,
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

NINE YEARS OLD

FEBRUARY 4, 1883

I

LORD of light, whose shrine no hands destroy,
God of song, whose hymn no tongue refuses,
Now, though spring far hence be cold and coy,
Bid the golden mouths of all the Muses
Ring forth gold of strains without alloy,
Till the ninefold rapture that suffuses
Heaven with song bid earth exult for joy,
Since the child whose head this dawn bedews is
Sweet as once thy violet-cradled boy.

II

Even as he lay lapped about with flowers,
Lies the life now nine years old before us
Lapped about with love in all its hours;
Hailed of many loves that chant in chorus
Loud or low from lush or leafless bowers,
Some from hearts exultant born sonorous,
Some scarce louder-voiced than soft-tongued showers
Two months hence, when spring's light wings poised o'er us
High shall hover, and her heart be ours.

III

Even as he, though man-forsaken, smiled
  On the soft kind snakes divinely bidden
There to feed him in the green mid wild
  Full with hurtless honey, till the hidden
Birth should prosper, finding fate more mild,
  So full-fed with pleasures unforbidden,
So by love's lures blamelessly beguiled,
  Laughs the nursling of our hearts unchidden
Yet by change that mars not yet the child.

IV

Ah, not yet! Thou, lord of night and day,
  Time, sweet father of such blameless pleasure,
Time, false friend who tak'st thy gifts away,
  Spare us yet some scantlings of the treasure,
Leave us yet some rapture of delay,
  Yet some bliss of blind and fearless leisure
Unprophetic of delight's decay,
  Yet some nights and days wherein to measure
All the joys that bless us while they may.

V

Not the waste Arcadian woodland, wet
  Still with dawn and vocal with Alpheus,
Reared a nursling worthier love's regret,
  Lord, than this, whose eyes beholden free us
Straight from bonds the soul would fain forget,
  Fain cast off, that night and day might see us

Clear once more of life's vain fume and fret:
  Leave us, then, whate'er thy doom decree us,
Yet some days wherein to love him yet.

VI

Yet some days wherein the child is ours,
  Ours, not thine, O lord whose hand is o'er us
Always, as the sky with suns and showers
  Dense and radiant, soundless or sonorous;
Yet some days for love's sake, ere the bowers
  Fade wherein his fair first years kept chorus
Night and day with Graces robed like hours,
  Ere this worshipped childhood wane before us,
Change, and bring forth fruit—but no more flowers.

VII

Love we may the thing that is to be,
  Love we must: but how forego this olden
Joy, this flower of childish love, that we
  Held more dear than aught of Time is holden—
Time, whose laugh is like as Death's to see—
  Time, who heeds not aught of all beholden,
Heard, or touched in passing—flower or tree,
  Tares or grain of leaden days or golden—
More than wind has heed of ships at sea?

VIII

First the babe, a very rose of joy,
  Sweet as hope's first note of jubilation,
Passes: then must growth and change destroy
  Next the child, and mar the consecration

Hallowing yet, ere thought or sense annoy,
  Childhood's yet half heavenlike habitation,
Bright as truth and frailer than a toy;
  Whence its guest with eager gratulation
Springs, and life grows larger round the boy.

IX

Yet, ere sunrise wholly cease to shine,
  Ere change come to chide our hearts, and scatter
Memories marked for love's sake with a sign,
  Let the light of dawn beholden flatter
Yet some while our eyes that feed on thine.
  Child, with love that change nor time can shatter,
Love, whose silent song says more than mine
  Now, though charged with elder loves and latter
Here it hails a lord whose years are nine.

AFTER A READING

For the seven times seventh time love would renew
the delight without end or alloy
That it takes in the praise as it takes in the presence
of eyes that fulfil it with joy;
But how shall it praise them and rest unrebuked by
the presence and pride of the boy?

Praise meet for a child is unmeet for an elder whose
winters and springs are nine:
What song may have strength in its wings to expand
them, or light in its eyes to shine,
That shall seem not as weakness and darkness if
matched with the theme I would fain make
mine?

The round little flower of a face that exults in the
sunshine of shadowless days
Defies the delight it enkindles to sing of it aught not
unfit for the praise
Of the sweetest of all things that eyes may rejoice in
and tremble with love as they gaze.

Such tricks and such meanings abound on the lips
and the brows that are brighter than light,
The demure little chin, the sedate little nose, and the
forehead of sun-stained white,
That love overflows into laughter and laughter sub-
sides into love at the sight.

Each limb and each feature has action in tune with
the meaning that smiles as it speaks
From the fervour of eyes and the fluttering of hands
in a foretaste of fancies and freaks,
When the thought of them deepens the dimples that
laugh in the corners and curves of his cheeks.

As a bird when the music within her is yet too in-
tense to be spoken in song,
That pauses a little for pleasure to feel how the notes
from withinwards throng,
So pauses the laugh at his lips for a little, and waxes
within more strong.

As the music elate and triumphal that bids all things
of the dawn bear part
With the tune that prevails when her passion has
risen into rapture of passionate art,
So lightens the laughter made perfect that leaps from
its nest in the heaven of his heart.

Deep, grave and sedate is the gaze of expectant
intensity bent for awhile
And absorbed on its aim as the tale that enthralls
him uncovers the weft of its wile,
Till the goal of attention is touched, and expectancy
kisses delight in a smile.

And it seems to us here that in Paradise hardly the
spirit of Lamb or of Blake
May hear or behold aught sweeter than lightens and
rings when his bright thoughts break
In laughter that well might lure them to look, and to
smile as of old for his sake.

O singers that best loved children, and best for their
sakes are beloved of us here,
In the world of your life everlasting, where love has
no thorn and desire has no fear,
All else may be sweeter than aught is on earth,
nought dearer than these are dear.

MAYTIME IN MIDWINTER

A NEW year gleams on us, tearful
  And troubled and smiling dim
As the smile on a lip still fearful,
  As glances of eyes that swim:
But the bird of my heart makes cheerful
  The days that are bright for him.

Child, how may a man's love merit
  The grace you shed as you stand,
The gift that is yours to inherit?
  Through you are the bleak days bland;
Your voice is a light to my spirit;
  You bring the sun in your hand.

The year's wing shows not a feather
  As yet of the plumes to be;
Yet here in the shrill grey weather
  The spring's self stands at my knee,
And laughs as we commune together,
  And lightens the world we see.

The rains are as dews for the christening
  Of dawns that the nights benumb:

MAYTIME IN MIDWINTER

The spring's voice answers me listening
For speech of a child to come,
While promise of music is glistening
On lips that delight keeps dumb.

The mists and the storms receding
At sight of you smile and die:
Your eyes held wide on me reading
Shed summer across the sky:
Your heart shines clear for me, heeding
No more of the world than I.

The world, what is it to you, dear,
And me, if its face be grey,
And the new-born year be a shrewd year
For flowers that the fierce winds fray?
You smile, and the sky seems blue, dear;
You laugh, and the month turns May.

Love cares not for care, he has daffed her
Aside as a mate for guile:
The sight that my soul yearns after
Feeds full my sense for awhile;
Your sweet little sun-faced laughter,
Your good little glad grave smile.

Your hands through the bookshelves flutter;
Scott, Shakespeare, Dickens, are caught;
Blake's visions, that lighten and mutter;
Molière—and his smile has nought
Left on it of sorrow, to utter
The secret things of his thought.

MAYTIME IN MIDWINTER

No grim thing written or graven
  But grows, if you gaze on it, bright;
A lark's note rings from the raven,
  And tragedy's robe turns white;
And shipwrecks drift into haven;
  And darkness laughs, and is light.

Grief seems but a vision of madness;
  Life's key-note peals from above
With nought in it more of sadness
  Than broods on the heart of a dove:
At sight of you, thought grows gladness,
  And life, through love of you, love.

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF AUGUST

(1884)

All Afric, winged with death and fire,
Pants in our pleasant English air.
Each blade of grass is tense as wire,
And all the wood's loose trembling hair
Stark in the broad and breathless glare
Of hours whose touch wastes herb and tree.
This bright sharp death shines everywhere;
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Earth seems a corpse upon the pyre;
The sun, a scourge for slaves to bear.
All power to fear, all keen desire,
Lies dead as dreams of days that were
Before the new-born world lay bare
In heaven's wide eye, whereunder we
Lie breathless till the season spare:
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Fierce hours, with ravening fangs that tire
On spirit and sense, divide and share
The throbs of thoughts that scarce respire,
The throes of dreams that scarce forbear

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF AUGUST

One mute immitigable prayer
For cold perpetual sleep to be
Shed snowlike on the sense of care.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The dust of ways where men suspire
Seems even the dust of death's dim lair.
But though the feverish days be dire
The sea-wind rears and cheers its fair
Blithe broods of babes that here and there
Make the sands laugh and glow for glee
With gladder flowers than gardens wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The music dies not off the lyre
That lets no soul alive despair.
Sleep strikes not dumb the breathless choir
Of waves whose note bids sorrow spare.
As glad they sound, as fast they fare,
As when fate's word first set them free
And gave them light and night to wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

For there, though night and day conspire
To compass round with toil and snare
And changeless whirl of change, whose gyre
Draws all things deathwards unaware,
The spirit of life they scourge and scare,
Wild waves that follow on waves that flee
Laugh, knowing that yet, though earth despair,
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

HEARTSEASE COUNTRY

TO ISABEL SWINBURNE

The far green westward heavens are bland,
  The far green Wiltshire downs are clear
As these deep meadows hard at hand:
  The sight knows hardly far from near,
  Nor morning joy from evening cheer.
In cottage garden-plots their bees
Find many a fervent flower to seize
  And strain and drain the heart away
From ripe sweet-williams and sweet-peas
  At every turn on every way.

But gladliest seems one flower to expand
  Its whole sweet heart all round us here;
'Tis Heartsease Country, Pansy Land.
  Nor sounds nor savours harsh and drear
  Where engines yell and halt and veer
Can vex the sense of him who sees
One flower-plot midway, that for trees
  Has poles, and sheds all grimed or grey
For bowers like those that take the breeze
  At every turn on every way.

Content even there they smile and stand,
  Sweet thought's heart-easing flowers, nor fear,
With reek and roaring steam though fanned,
  Nor shrink nor perish as they peer.
  The heart's eye holds not those more dear
That glow between the lanes and leas
Where'er the homeliest hand may please
  To bid them blossom as they may
Where light approves and wind agrees
  At every turn on every way.

Sister, the word of winds and seas
Endures not as the word of these
  Your wayside flowers whose breath would say
How hearts that love may find heart's ease
  At every turn on every way.

A BALLAD OF APPEAL

TO CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

Song wakes with every wakening year
From hearts of birds that only feel
Brief spring's deciduous flower-time near:
And song more strong to help or heal
Shall silence worse than winter seal?
From love-lit thought's remurmuring cave
The notes that rippled, wave on wave,
Were clear as love, as faith were strong;
And all souls blessed the soul that gave
Sweet water from the well of song.

All hearts bore fruit of joy to hear,
All eyes felt mist upon them steal
For joy's sake, trembling toward a tear,
When, loud as marriage-bells that peal,
Or flutelike soft, or keen like steel,
Sprang the sheer music; sharp or grave,
We heard the drift of winds that drave,
And saw, swept round by ghosts in throng,
Dark rocks, that yielded, where they clave,
Sweet water from the well of song.

A BALLAD OF APPEAL

Blithe verse made all the dim sense clear
  That smiles of babbling babes conceal:
Prayer's perfect heart spake here: and here
  Rose notes of blameless woe and weal,
  More soft than this poor song's appeal.
Where orchards bask, where cornfields wave,
They dropped like rains that cleanse and lave,
  And scattered all the year along,
Like dewfall on an April grave,
  Sweet water from the well of song.

Ballad, go bear our prayer, and crave
Pardon, because thy lowlier stave
  Can do this plea no right, but wrong,
Ask nought beside thy pardon, save
  Sweet water from the well of song.

CRADLE SONGS

(TO A TUNE OF BLAKE'S)

I

Baby, baby bright,
Sleep can steal from sight
Little of your light:

Soft as fire in dew,
Still the life in you
Lights your slumber through.

Four white eyelids keep
Fast the seal of sleep
Deep as love is deep:

Yet, though closed it lies,
Love behind them spies
Heaven in two blue eyes.

II

Baby, baby dear,
Earth and heaven are near
Now, for heaven is here.

Heaven is every place
Where your flower-sweet face
Fills our eyes with grace.

Till your own eyes deign
Earth a glance again,
Earth and heaven are twain.

Now your sleep is done,
Shine, and show the sun
Earth and heaven are one.

III

Baby, baby sweet,
Love's own lips are meet
Scarce to kiss your feet.

Hardly love's own ear,
When your laugh crows clear,
Quite deserves to hear.

Hardly love's own wile,
Though it please awhile,
Quite deserves your smile.

Baby full of grace,
Bless us yet a space:
Sleep will come apace.

IV

Baby, baby true,
Man, whate'er he do,
May deceive not you.

Smiles whose love is guile,
Worn a flattering while,
Win from you no smile.

One, the smile alone
Out of love's heart grown,
Ever wins your own.

Man, a dunce uncouth,
Errs in age and youth:
Babies know the truth.

V

Baby, baby fair,
Love is fain to dare
Bless your haughtiest air

Baby blithe and bland,
Reach but forth a hand
None may dare withstand;

Love, though wellnigh cowed,
Yet would praise aloud
Pride so sweetly proud.

No! the fitting word
Even from breeze or bird
Never yet was heard.

VI

Baby, baby kind,
Though no word we find,
Bear us yet in mind.

Half a little hour,
Baby bright in bower,
Keep this thought aflower—

Love it is, I see,
Here with heart and knee
Bows and worships me.

What can baby do,
Then, for love so true?—
Let it worship you.

VII

Baby, baby wise,
Love's divine surmise
Lights your constant eyes.

Day and night and day
One mute word would they,
As the soul saith, say.

Trouble comes and goes;
Wonder ebbs and flows;
Love remains and glows.

As the fledgeling dove
Feels the breast above,
So your heart feels love.

PELAGIUS

I

The sea shall praise him and the shores bear part
That reared him when the bright south world was black
With fume of creeds more foul than hell's own rack,
Still darkening more love's face with loveless art
Since Paul, faith's fervent Antichrist, of heart
Heroic, haled the world vehemently back
From Christ's pure path on dire Jehovah's track,
And said to dark Elisha's Lord, "Thou art."
But one whose soul had put the raiment on
Of love that Jesus left with James and John
Withstood that Lord whose seals of love were lies,
Seeing what we see—how, touched by Truth's bright rod,
The fiend whom Jews and Africans called God
Feels his own hell take hold on him, and dies.

II

The world has no such flower in any land,
And no such pearl in any gulf the sea,
As any babe on any mother's knee.
But all things blessed of men by saints are banned:

God gives them grace to read and understand
  The palimpsest of evil, writ where we,
  Poor fools and lovers but of love, can see
Nought save a blessing signed by Love's own hand.
The smile that opens heaven on us for them
  Hath sin's transmitted birthmark hid therein:
    The kiss it craves calls down from heaven a rod.
If innocence be sin that Gods condemn,
  Praise we the men who so being born in sin
    First dared the doom and broke the bonds of
      God.

III

Man's heel is on the Almighty's neck who said,
  Let there be hell, and there was hell—on earth.
  But not for that may men forget their worth—
Nay, but much more remember them—who led
The living first from dwellings of the dead,
  And rent the cerecloths that were wont to engirth
  Souls wrapped and swathed and swaddled from
      their birth
With lies that bound them fast from heel to head.
Among the tombs when wise men all their lives
Dwelt, and cried out, and cut themselves with
      knives,
These men, being foolish, and of saints abhorred,
  Beheld in heaven the sun by saints reviled,
Love, and on earth one everlasting Lord
  In every likeness of a little child.

LOUIS BLANC

THREE SONNETS TO HIS MEMORY

I

The stainless soul that smiled through glorious eyes;
The bright grave brow whereon dark fortune's blast
Might blow, but might not bend it, nor o'ercast,
Save for one fierce fleet hour of shame, the skies
Thrilled with warm dreams of worthier days to rise
And end the whole world's winter; here at last,
If death be death, have passed into the past;
If death be life, live, though their semblance dies.
Hope and high faith inviolate of distrust
Shone strong as life inviolate of the grave
Through each bright word and lineament serene.
Most loving righteousness and love most just
Crowned, as day crowns the dawn-enkindled wave,
With visible aureole thine unfaltering mien.

II

Strong time and fire-swift change, with lightnings clad
And shod with thunders of reverberate years,
Have filled with light and sound of hopes and fears
The space of many a season, since I had

Grace of good hap to make my spirit glad,
Once communing with thine: and memory hears
The bright voice yet that then rejoiced mine ears,
Sees yet the light of eyes that spake, and bade
Fear not, but hope, though then time's heart were weak
And heaven by hell shade-stricken, and the range
Of high-born hope made questionable and strange
As twilight trembling till the sunlight speak.
Thou sawest the sunrise and the storm in one
Break: seest thou now the storm-compelling sun?

III

Surely thou seest, O spirit of light and fire,
Surely thou canst not choose, O soul, but see
The days whose dayspring was beheld of thee
Ere eyes less pure might have their hope's desire,
Beholding life in heaven again respire
Where men saw nought that was or was to be,
Save only death imperial. Thou and he
Who has the heart of all men's hearts for lyre,
Ye twain, being great of spirit as time is great,
And sure of sight as truth's own heavenward eye,
Beheld the forms of forces passing by
And certitude of equal-balanced fate,
Whose breath forefelt makes darkness palpitate,
And knew that light should live and darkness die.

VOS DEOS LAUDAMUS:

THE CONSERVATIVE JOURNALIST'S ANTHEM

"As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived—not Cæsar or Pericles, not Shakespeare or Michael Angelo—could confer honour more than he took on entering the House of Lords."—*Saturday Review*, December 15, 1883.

"Clumsy and shallow snobbery—can do no hurt."—*Ibid.*

I

O Lords our Gods, beneficent, sublime,
In the evening, and before the morning flames,
We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.
The slave is he that serves not; his the crime
And shame, who hails not as the crown of Time
That House wherein the all-envious world acclaims
Such glory that the reflex of it shames
All crowns bestowed of men for prose or rhyme.
The serf, the cur, the sycophant is he
Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee
When from a height too high for Shakespeare nods
The wearer of a higher than Milton's crown.
Stoop, Chaucer, stoop: Keats, Shelley, Burns, bow down:
These have no part with you, O Lords our Gods.

II

O Lords our Gods, it is not that ye sit
  Serene above the thunder, and exempt
  From strife of tongues and casualties that tempt
Men merely found by proof of manhood fit
For service of their fellows: this is it
  Which sets you past the reach of Time's attempt,
  Which gives us right of justified contempt
For commonwealths built up by mere men's wit:
That gold unlocks not, nor may flatteries ope,
The portals of your heaven; that none may hope
  With you to watch how life beneath you plods,
Save for high service given, high duty done;
That never was your rank ignobly won:
  For this we give you praise, O Lords our Gods.

III

O Lords our Gods, the times are evil: you
  Redeem the time, because of evil days.
  While abject souls in servitude of praise
Bow down to heads untitled, and the crew
Whose honour dwells but in the deeds they do,
  From loftier hearts your nobler servants raise
  More manful salutation: yours are bays
That not the dawn's plebeian pearls bedew;
Yours, laurels plucked not of such hands as wove
Old age its chaplet in Colonos' grove.

VOS DEOS LAUDAMUS

Our time, with heaven and with itself at odds,
Makes all lands else as seas that seethe and boil;
But yours are yet the corn and wine and oil,
And yours our worship yet, O Lords our Gods.

December 15, 1883.

ON THE BICENTENARY OF CORNEILLE

CELEBRATED UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF VICTOR HUGO

Scarce two hundred years are gone, and the world is past away
As a noise of brawling wind, as a flash of breaking foam,
That beheld the singer born who raised up the dead of Rome;
And a mightier now than he bids him too rise up to-day.
All the dim great age is dust, and its king is tombless clay,
But its loftier laurel green as in living eyes it clomb,
And his memory whom it crowned hath his people's heart for home,
And the shade across it falls of a lordlier-flowering bay.

Stately shapes about the tomb of their mighty maker pace,
Heads of high-plumed Spaniards shine, souls revive of Roman race,

Sound of arms and words of wail through the glowing
darkness rise,
Speech of hearts heroic rings forth of lips that
know not breath,
And the light of thoughts august fills the pride of
kindling eyes
Whence of yore the spell of song drove the shadow
of darkling death.

IN SEPULCRETIS

"Vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cœnam."—CATULLUS, LIX. 3.

"To publish even one line of an author which he himself has not intended for the public at large—especially letters which are addressed to private persons—is to commit a despicable act of felony."—HEINE.

I

It is not then enough that men who give
The best gifts given of man to man should feel,
Alive, a snake's head ever at their heel:
Small hurt the worms may do them while they live—
Such hurt as scorn for scorn's sake may forgive.
But now, when death and fame have set one seal
On tombs whereat Love, Grief, and Glory kneel,
Men sift all secrets, in their critic sieve,
Of graves wherein the dust of death might shrink
To know what tongues defile the dead man's name
With loathsome love, and praise that stings like shame.
Rest once was theirs, who had crossed the mortal brink:
No rest, no reverence now: dull fools undress
Death's holiest shrine, life's veriest nakedness.

II

A man was born, sang, suffered, loved, and died.
  Men scorned him living: let us praise him dead.
  His life was brief and bitter, gently led
And proudly, but with pure and blameless pride.
He wrought no wrong toward any; satisfied
  With love and labour, whence our souls are fed
  With largesse yet of living wine and bread.
Come, let us praise him: here is nought to hide.
Make bare the poor dead secrets of his heart,
  Strip the stark-naked soul, that all may peer,
  Spy, smirk, sniff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl, and
    sneer:
Let none so sad, let none so sacred part
  Lie still for pity, rest unstirred for shame,
  But all be scanned of all men. This is fame.

III

"Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!" [1]
  If one, that strutted up the brawling streets
  As foreman of the flock whose concourse greets
Men's ears with bray more dissonant than brass,
Would change from blame to praise as coarse and
    crass
  His natural note, and learn the fawning feats
  Of lapdogs, who but knows what luck he meets?
But all in vain old fable holds her glass.

[1] *Titus Andronicus*, Act iv., Scene 2.

Mocked and reviled by men of poisonous breath,
A great man dies: but one thing worst was spared;
Not all his heart by their base hands lay bared.
One comes to crown with praise the dust of death;
And lo, through him this worst is brought to pass.
Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!

IV

Shame, such as never yet dealt heavier stroke
On heads more shameful, fall on theirs through whom
Dead men may keep inviolate not their tomb,
But all its depths these ravenous grave-worms choke.
And yet what waste of wrath were this, to invoke
Shame on the shameless? Even their twin-born doom,
Their native air of life, a carrion fume,
Their natural breath of love, a noisome smoke,
The bread they break, the cup whereof they drink,
The record whose remembrance damns their name,
Smells, tastes, and sounds of nothing but of shame.
If thankfulness nor pity bids them think
What work is this of theirs, and pause betimes,
Not Shakespeare's grave would scare them off with rhymes.

LOVE AND SCORN

I

Love, loyallest and lordliest born of things,
Immortal that shouldst be, though all else end,
In plighted hearts of fearless friend with friend,
Whose hand may curb or clip thy plume-plucked wings?
Not grief's nor time's: though these be lords and kings
Crowned, and their yoke bid vassal passions bend,
They may not pierce the spirit of sense, or blend
Quick poison with the soul's live watersprings.
The true clear heart whose core is manful trust
Fears not that very death may turn to dust
Love lit therein as toward a brother born,
If one touch make not all its fine gold rust,
If one breath blight not all its glad ripe corn,
And all its fire be turned to fire of scorn.

II

Scorn only, scorn begot of bitter proof
By keen experience of a trustless heart,
Bears burning in her new-born hand the dart
Wherewith love dies heart-stricken, and the roof

Falls of his palace, and the storied woof
  Long woven of many a year with life's whole art
  Is rent like any rotten weed apart,
And hardly with reluctant eyes aloof
Cold memory guards one relic scarce exempt
Yet from the fierce corrosion of contempt,
  And hardly saved by pity. Woe are we
That once we loved, and love not; but we know
The ghost of love, surviving yet in show,
  Where scorn has passed, is vain as grief must be.

III

O sacred, just, inevitable scorn,
  Strong child of righteous judgment, whom with grief
  The rent heart bears, and wins not yet relief,
Seeing of its pain so dire a portent born,
Must thou not spare one sheaf of all the corn,
  One doit of all the treasure? not one sheaf,
  Not one poor doit of all? not one dead leaf
Of all that fell and left behind a thorn?
Is man so strong that one should scorn another?
Is any as God, not made of mortal mother,
  That love should turn in him to gall and flame?
Nay: but the true is not the false heart's brother:
  Love cannot love disloyalty: the name
  That else it wears is love no more, but shame.

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD DOYLE

A LIGHT of blameless laughter, fancy-bred,
Soft-souled and glad and kind as love or sleep,
Fades, and sweet mirth's own eyes are fain to weep
Because her blithe and gentlest bird is dead.
Weep, elves and fairies all, that never shed
Tear yet for mortal mourning: you that keep
The doors of dreams whence nought of ill may creep,
Mourn once for one whose lips your honey fed.
Let waters of the Golden River steep
The rose-roots whence his grave blooms rosy-red,
And murmuring of Hyblæan hives be deep
About the summer silence of its bed,
And nought less gracious than a violet peep
Between the grass grown greener round his head.

IN MEMORY OF HENRY A. BRIGHT

Yet again another, ere his crowning year,
Gone from friends that here may look for him no more.
Never now for him shall hope set wide the door,
Hope that hailed him hither, fain to greet him here.
All the gracious garden-flowers he held so dear,
Oldworld English blossoms, all his homestead store,
Oldworld grief had strewn them round his bier of yore,
Bidding each drop leaf by leaf as tear by tear;
Rarer lutes than mine had borne more tuneful token,
Touched by subtler hands than echoing time can wrong,
Sweet as flowers had strewn his graveward path along.
Now may no such old sweet dirges more be spoken,
Now the flowers whose breath was very song are broken,
Nor may sorrow find again so sweet a song.

A SOLITUDE

Sea beyond sea, sand after sweep of sand,
Here ivory smooth, here cloven and ridged with flow
Of channelled waters soft as rain or snow,
Stretch their lone length at ease beneath the bland
Grey gleam of skies whose smile on wave and strand
Shines weary like a man's who smiles to know
That now no dream can mock his faith with show,
Nor cloud for him seem living sea or land.

Is there an end at all of all this waste,
These crumbling cliffs defeatured and defaced,
These ruinous heights of sea-sapped walls that slide
Seaward with all their banks of bleak blown flowers
Glad yet of life, ere yet their hope subside
Beneath the coil of dull dense waves and hours?

VICTOR HUGO:
L'ARCHIPEL DE LA MANCHE

Sea and land are fairer now, nor aught is all the same,
Since a mightier hand than Time's hath woven their votive wreath.
Rocks as swords half drawn from out the smooth wave's jewelled sheath,
Fields whose flowers a tongue divine hath numbered name by name,
Shores whereby the midnight or the noon clothed round with flame
Hears the clamour jar and grind which utters from beneath
Cries of hungering waves like beasts fast bound that gnash their teeth,
All of these the sun that lights them lights not like his fame;
None of these is but the thing it was before he came.
Where the darkling overfalls like dens of torment seethe,
High on tameless moorlands, down in meadows bland and tame,
Where the garden hides, and where the wind uproots the heath,
Glory now henceforth for ever, while the world shall be,
Shines, a star that keeps not time with change on earth and sea.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE LORDS

I

Is the sound a trumpet blown, or a bell for burial tolled,
Whence the whole air vibrates now to the clash of words like swords—
"Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords;
Long enough the world has mocked us, and marvelled to behold
How the grown man bears the curb whence his boyhood was controlled"?
Nay, but hearken: surer counsel more sober speech affords:
"Is the past not all inscribed with the praises of our Lords?
Is the memory dead of deeds done of yore, the love grown cold
That should bind our hearts to trust in their counsels wise and bold?
These that stand against you now, senseless crowds and heartless hordes,
Are not these the sons of men that withstood your kings of old?
Theirs it is to bind and loose; theirs the key that knows the wards,

Theirs the staff to lead or smite; yours, the spades
and ploughs and hods:
Theirs to hear and yours to cry, Power is yours,
O Lords our Gods."

II

Hear, O England: these are they that would counsel
thee aright.
Wouldst thou fain have all thy sons sons of thine
indeed, and free?
Nay, but then no more at all as thou hast been
shalt thou be:
Needs must many dwell in darkness, that some may
look on light;
Needs must poor men brook the wrong that ensures
the rich man's right.
How shall kings and lords be worshipped, if no
man bow the knee?
How, if no man worship these, may thy praise
endure with thee?
How, except thou trust in these, shall thy name not
lose its might?
These have had their will of thee since the Norman
came to smite:
Sires on grandsires, even as wave after wave along
the sea,
Sons on sires have followed, steadfast as clouds or
hours in flight.
Time alone hath power to say, time alone hath
eyes to see,

If your walls of rule be built but of clay-compacted
sods,
If your place of old shall know you no more, O Lords
our Gods.

III

Through the stalls wherein ye sit sounds a sentence
while we wait,
Set your house in order: is it not builded on the
sand?
Set your house in order, seeing the night is hard at
hand.
As the twilight of the Gods in the northern dream of
fate
Is this hour that comes against you, albeit this hour
come late.
Ye whom Time and Truth bade heed, and ye would
not understand,
Now an axe draws nigh the tree overshadowing all
the land,
And its edge of doom is set to the root of all your
state.
Light is more than darkness now, faith than fear and
hope than hate;
And what morning wills, behold, all the night shall
not withstand.
Rods of office, helms of rule, staffs of wise men,
crowns of great,
While the people willed, ye bare; now their hopes
and hearts expand,

THE TWILIGHT OF THE LORDS

Time with silent foot makes dust of your broken
crowns and rods,
And the lordship of your godhead is gone, O Lords
our Gods.

CLEAR THE WAY!

Clear the way, my lords and lackeys! you have had your day.
Here you have your answer—England's yea against your nay:
Long enough your house has held you: up, and clear the way!

Lust and falsehood, craft and traffic, precedent and gold,
Tongue of courtier, kiss of harlot, promise bought and sold,
Gave you heritage of empire over thralls of old.

Now that all these things are rotten, all their gold is rust,
Quenched the pride they lived by, dead the faith and cold the lust,
Shall their heritage not also turn again to dust?

By the grace of these they reigned, who left their sons their sway:
By the grace of these, what England says her lords unsay:
Till at last her cry go forth against them—Clear the way!

CLEAR THE WAY!

By the grace of trust in treason knaves have lived
and lied:
By the force of fear and folly fools have fed their
pride:
By the strength of sloth and custom reason stands
defied.

Lest perchance your reckoning on some latter day be
worse,
Halt and hearken, lords of land and princes of the
purse,
Ere the tide be full that comes with blessing and with
curse.

Where we stand, as where you sit, scarce falls a
sprinkling spray;
But the wind that swells, the wave that follows, none
shall stay:
Spread no more of sail for shipwreck: out, and clear
the way!

A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY

MEN, born of the land that for ages
  Has been honoured where freedom was dear,
Till your labour wax fat on its wages
  You shall never be peers of a peer.
    Where might is, the right is:
      Long purses make strong swords.
    Let weakness learn meekness:
      God save the House of Lords!

You are free to consume in stagnation:
  You are equal in right to obey:
You are brothers in bonds, and the nation
  Is your mother—whose sons are her prey.
    Those others your brothers,
      Who toil not, weave, nor till,
    Refuse you and use you
      As waiters on their will.

But your fathers bowed down to their masters
  And obeyed them and served and adored.
Shall the sheep not give thanks to their pastors?
  Shall the serf not give praise to his lord?

Time, waning and gaining,
Grown other now than then,
Needs pastors and masters
For sheep, and not for men.

If his grandsire did service in battle,
If his grandam was kissed by a king,
Must men to my lord be as cattle
Or as apes that he leads in a string?
To deem so, to dream so,
Would bid the world proclaim
The dastards for bastards,
Not heirs of England's fame.

Not in spite but in right of dishonour,
There are actors who trample your boards
Till the earth that endures you upon her
Grows weary to bear you, my lords.
Your token is broken,
It will not pass for gold:
Your glory looks hoary,
Your sun in heaven turns cold.

They are worthy to reign on their brothers,
To contemn them as clods and as carles,
Who are Graces by grace of such mothers
As brightened the bed of King Charles.
What manner of banner,
What fame is this they flaunt,
That Britain, soul-smitten,
Should shrink before their vaunt?

A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY

Bright sons of sublime prostitution,
You are made of the mire of the street
Where your grandmothers walked in pollution
Till a coronet shone at their feet.
Your Graces, whose faces
Bear high the bastard's brand,
Seem stronger no longer
Than all this honest land.

But the sons of her soldiers and seamen,
They are worthy forsooth of their hire.
If the father won praise from all free men,
Shall the sons not exult in their sire?
Let money make sunny
And power make proud their lives,
And feed them and breed them
Like drones in drowsiest hives.

But if haply the name be a burden
And the souls be no kindred of theirs,
Should wise men rejoice in such guerdon
Or brave men exult in such heirs?
Or rather the father
Frown, shamefaced, on the son,
And no men but foemen,
Deriding, cry "Well done"?

Let the gold and the land they inherit
Pass ever from hand into hand:
In right of the forefather's merit
Let the gold be the son's, and the land.

Soft raiment, rich payment,
High place, the state affords;
Full measure of pleasure;
But now no more, my lords.

Is the future beleaguered with dangers
If the poor be far other than slaves?
Shall the sons of the land be as strangers
In the land of their forefathers' graves?
Shame were it to bear it,
And shame it were to see:
If free men you be, men,
Let proof proclaim you free.

"But democracy means dissolution:
See, laden with clamour and crime,
How the darkness of dim revolution
Comes deepening the twilight of time!
Ah, better the fetter
That holds the poor man's hand
Than peril of sterile
Blind change that wastes the land.

"Gaze forward through clouds that environ;
It shall be as it was in the past:
Not with dreams, but with blood and with iron,
Shall a nation be moulded to last."
So teach they, so preach they,
Who dream themselves the dream
That hallows the gallows
And bids the scaffold stream.

"With a hero at head, and a nation
Well gagged and well drilled and well cowed,
And a gospel of war and damnation,
Has not empire a right to be proud?
Fools prattle and tattle
Of freedom, reason, right,
The beauty of duty,
The loveliness of light.

"But we know, we believe it, we see it,
Force only has power upon earth."
So be it! and ever so be it
For souls that are bestial by birth!
Let Prussian with Russian
Exchange the kiss of slaves:
But sea-folk are free folk
By grace of winds and waves.

Has the past from the sepulchres beckoned?
Let answer from Englishmen be—
No man shall be lord of us reckoned
Who is baser, not better, than we.
No coward, empowered
To soil a brave man's name:
For shame's sake and fame's sake,
Enough of fame and shame.

Fame needs not the golden addition;
Shame bears it abroad as a brand.
Let the deed, and no more the tradition,
Speak out and be heard through the land.

Pride, rootless and fruitless,
No longer takes and gives:
But surer and purer
The soul of England lives.

He is master and lord of his brothers
Who is worthier and wiser than they.
Him only, him surely, shall others,
Else equal, observe and obey.
Truth, flawless and awless,
Do falsehood what it can,
Makes royal the loyal
And simple heart of man.

Who are these, then, that England should hearken,
Who rage and wax wroth and grow pale
If she turn from the sunsets that darken
And her ship for the morning set sail?
Let strangers fear dangers:
All know, that hold her dear,
Dishonour upon her
Can only fall through fear.

Men, born of the landsmen and seamen
Who served her with souls and with swords,
She bids you be brothers, and free men,
And lordless, and fearless of lords.
She cares not, she dares not
Care now for gold or steel:
Light lead her, truth speed her,
God save the Commonweal!

A WORD FOR THE NATION

I

A WORD across the water
  Against our ears is borne,
Of threatenings and of slaughter,
  Of rage and spite and scorn:
We have not, alack, an ally to befriend us,
And the season is ripe to extirpate and end us:
Let the German touch hands with the Gaul,
And the fortress of England must fall;
And the sea shall be swept of her seamen,
  And the waters they ruled be their graves,
And Dutchmen and Frenchmen be free men,
    And Englishmen slaves.

II

Our time once more is over,
  Once more our end is near:
A bull without a drover,
  The Briton reels to rear,
And the van of the nations is held by his betters,
And the seas of the world shall be loosed from
    his fetters,
And his glory shall pass as a breath,
And the life that is in him be death;

And the sepulchre sealed on his glory
  For a sign to the nations shall be
As of Tyre and of Carthage in story,
    Once lords of the sea.

III

The lips are wise and loyal,
  The hearts are brave and true,
Imperial thoughts and royal
  Make strong the clamorous crew,
Whence louder and prouder the noise of defiance
Rings rage from the grave of a trustless alliance,
And bids us beware and be warned,
As abhorred of all nations and scorned,
As a swordless and spiritless nation,
  A wreck on the waste of the waves.
So foams the released indignation
    Of masterless slaves.

IV

Brute throats that miss the collar,
  Bowed backs that ask the whip,
Stretched hands that lack the dollar,
  And many a lie-seared lip,
Forefeel and foreshow for us signs as funereal
As the signs that were regal of yore and imperial;
We shall pass as the princes they served,
We shall reap what our fathers deserved,
And the place that was England's be taken
  By one that is worthier than she,
And the yoke of her empire be shaken
    Like spray from the sea.

V

French hounds, whose necks are aching
  Still from the chain they crave,
In dog-day madness breaking
  The dog-leash, thus may rave:
But the seas that for ages have fostered and fenced her
Laugh, echoing the yell of their kennel against her
And their moan if destruction draw near them
And the roar of her laughter to hear them;
For she knows that if Englishmen be men
  Their England has all that she craves;
All love and all honour from free men,
    All hatred from slaves.

VI

All love that rests upon her
  Like sunshine and sweet air,
All light of perfect honour
  And praise that ends in prayer,
She wins not more surely, she wears not more proudly,
Than the token of tribute that clatters thus loudly,
The tribute of foes when they meet
That rattles and rings at her feet,
The tribute of rage and of rancour,
  The tribute of slaves to the free,
To the people whose hope hath its anchor
    Made fast in the sea.

VII

No fool that bows the back he
  Feels fit for scourge or brand,
No scurril scribes that lackey
  The lords of Lackeyland,
No penman that yearns, as he turns on his pallet,
For the place or the pence of a peer or a valet,
No whelp of as currish a pack
As the litter whose yelp it gives back,
Though he answer the cry of his brother
  As echoes might answer from caves,
Shall be witness as though for a mother
      Whose children were slaves.

VIII

But those found fit to love her,
  Whose love has root in faith,
Who hear, though darkness cover
  Time's face, what memory saith,
Who seek not the service of great men or small men
But the weal that is common for comfort of all men
Those yet that in trust have beholden
Truth's dawn over England grow golden
And quicken the darkness that stagnates
  And scatter the shadows that flee,
Shall reply for her meanest as magnates
      And masters by sea.

IX

And all shall mark her station,
  Her message all shall hear,
When, equal-eyed, the nation
  Bids all her sons draw near,
And freedom be more than tradition or faction,
And thought be no swifter to serve her than action,
And justice alone be above her,
That love may be prouder to love her,
And time on the crest of her story
  Inscribe, as remembrance engraves,
The sign that subdues with its glory
    Kings, princes, and slaves.

A WORD FROM THE PSALMIST

Ps. xciv. 8

I

"Take heed, ye unwise among the people:
O ye fools, when will ye understand?"
From pulpit or choir beneath the steeple,
Though the words be fierce, the tones are bland.
But a louder than the Church's echo thunders
In the ears of men who may not choose but hear;
And the heart in him that hears it leaps and wonders,
With triumphant hope astonished, or with fear.
For the names whose sound was power awaken
Neither love nor reverence now nor dread;
Their strongholds and shrines are stormed and taken,
Their kingdom and all its works are dead.

II

Take heed: for the tide of time is risen:
It is full not yet, though now so high
That spirits and hopes long pent in prison
Feel round them a sense of freedom nigh,

And a savour keen and sweet of brine and billow,
And a murmur deep and strong of deepening strength.
Though the watchman dream, with sloth or pride for pillow,
And the night be long, not endless is its length.
From the springs of dawn, from clouds that sever,
From the equal heavens and the eastward sea,
The witness comes that endures for ever,
Till men be brethren and thralls be free.

III

But the wind of the wings of dawn expanding
Strikes chill on your hearts as change and death.
Ye are old, but ye have not understanding;
And proud, but your pride is a dead man's breath.
And your wise men, toward whose words and signs ye hearken,
And your strong men, in whose hands ye put your trust,
Strain eyes to behold but clouds and dreams that darken,
Stretch hands that can find but weapons red with rust.
Their watchword rings, and the night rejoices,
But the lark's note laughs at the night-bird's notes—
"Is virtue verily found in voices?
Or is wisdom won when all win votes?

IV

"Take heed, ye unwise indeed, who listen
When the wind's wings beat and shift and change;
Whose hearts are uplift, whose eyeballs glisten,
With desire of new things great and strange.
Let not dreams misguide nor any visions wrong you:
That which has been, it is now as it was then.
Is not Compromise of old a god among you?
Is not Precedent indeed a king of men?
But the windy hopes that lead mislead you,
And the sounds ye hear are void and vain.
Is a vote a coat? will franchise feed you,
Or words be a roof against the rain?

V

"Eight ages are gone since kingship entered,
With knights and peers at its harnessed back,
And the land, no more in its own strength centred,
Was cast for a prey to the princely pack.
But we pared the fangs and clipped the ravening claws of it,
And good was in time brought forth of an evil thing,
And the land's high name waxed lordlier in war because of it,
When chartered Right had bridled and curbed the king.

And what so fair has the world beholden,
And what so firm has withstood the years,
As Monarchy bound in chains all golden,
And Freedom guarded about with peers?

VI

"How think ye? know not your lords and masters
What collars are meet for brawling throats?
Is change not mother of strange disasters?
Shall plague or peril be stayed by votes?
Out of precedent and privilege and order
Have we plucked the flower of compromise, whose root
Bears blossoms that shine from border again to border,
And the mouths of many are fed with its temperate fruit.
Your masters are wiser than ye, their henchmen:
Your lords know surely whereof ye have need.
Equality? Fools, would you fain be Frenchmen?
Is equity more than a word indeed?

VII

"Your voices, forsooth, your most sweet voices,
Your worthy voices, your love your hate,
Your choice, who knows not whereof your choice is,
What stays are these for a stable state?

Inconstancy, blind and deaf with its own fierce babble,
Swells ever your throats with storm of uncertain cheers:
He leans on straws who leans on a light-souled rabble;
His trust is frail who puts not his trust in peers."
So shrills the message whose word convinces
Of righteousness knaves, of wisdom fools;
That serfs may boast them because of princes,
And the weak rejoice that the strong man rules.

VIII

True friends, ye people, are these, the faction
Full-mouthed that flatters and snarls and bays,
That fawns and foams with alternate action,
And mocks the names that it soils with praise.
As from fraud and force their power had first beginning,
So by righteousness and peace it may not stand,
But by craft of state and nets of secret spinning,
Words that weave and unweave wiles like ropes of sand,
Form, custom, and gold, and laws grown hoary,
And strong tradition that guards the gate:
To these, O people, to these give glory,
That your name among nations may be great.

A WORD FROM THE PSALMIST

IX

How long—for haply not now much longer—
Shall fear put faith in a faithless creed,
And shapes and shadows of truths be stronger
In strong men's eyes than the truth indeed?
If freedom be not a word that dies when spoken,
If justice be not a dream whence men must wake,
How shall not the bonds of the thraldom of old be broken,
And right put might in the hands of them that break?
For clear as a tocsin from the steeple
Is the cry gone forth along the land,
Take heed, ye unwise among the people:
O ye fools, when will ye understand?

A BALLAD AT PARTING

Sea to sea that clasps and fosters England, uttering
evermore
Song eterne and praise immortal of the indomitable
shore,
Lifts aloud her constant heart up, south to north
and east to west,
Here in speech that shames all music, there in thun-
der-throated roar,
Chiming concord out of discord, waking rapture
out of rest.
All her ways are lovely, all her works and symbols
are divine,
Yet shall man love best what first bade leap his
heart and bend his knee;
Yet where first his whole soul worshipped shall his
soul set up her shrine:
Nor may love not know the lovelier, fair as both
beheld may be,
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait
south-western sea.

Though their chant bear all one burden, as ere man
was born it bore;
Though the burden be diviner than the songs all
souls adore;

Yet may love not choose but choose between them
which to love the best.
Me the sea my nursing-mother, me the Channel
green and hoar,
Holds at heart more fast than all things, bares for
me the goodlier breast,
Lifts for me the lordlier love-song, bids for me more
sunlight shine,
Sounds for me the stormier trumpet of the sweeter
strain to me.
So the broad pale Thames is loved not like the tawny
springs of Tyne:
Choice is clear between them for the soul whose
vision holds in fee
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait
south-western sea.

Choice is clear, but dear is either; nor has either not
in store
Many a likeness, many a written sign of spirit-
searching lore,
Whence the soul takes fire of sweet remembrance,
magnified and blest.
Thought of songs whose flame-winged feet have trod
the unfooted water-floor
When the lord of all the living lords of souls bade
speed their quest;
Soft live sound like children's babble down the rip-
pling sand's incline,
Or the lovely song that loves them, hailed with
thankful prayer and plea;

A BALLAD AT PARTING

These are parcels of the harvest here whose gathered
sheaves are mine,
Garnered now, but sown and reaped where winds
make wild with wrath or glee
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait
south-western sea.

Song, thy name is freedom, seeing thy strength was
born of breeze and brine.
Fare now forth and fear no fortune; such a seal is
set on thee.
Joy begat and memory bare thee, seeing in spirit a
twofold sign,
Even the sign of those thy fosters, each as thou
from all time free,
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait
south-western sea.

ASTROPHEL

AND OTHER POEMS

TO WILLIAM MORRIS

ASTROPHEL

AFTER READING SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S ARCADIA IN THE GARDEN OF AN OLD ENGLISH MANOR HOUSE

I

A star in the silence that follows
The song of the death of the sun
Speaks music in heaven, and the hollows
And heights of the world are as one;
One lyre that outsings and outlightens
The rapture of sunset, and thrills
Mute night till the sense of it brightens
The soul that it fills.

The flowers of the sun that is sunken
Hang heavy of heart as of head;
The bees that have eaten and drunken
The soul of their sweetness are fled;
But a sunflower of song, on whose honey
My spirit has fed as a bee,
Makes sunnier than morning was sunny
The twilight for me.

The letters and lines on the pages
That sundered mine eyes and the flowers
Wax faint as the shadows of ages
That sunder their season and ours;

As the ghosts of the centuries that sever
A season of colourless time
From the days whose remembrance is ever
As they were, sublime.

The season that bred and that cherished
The soul that I commune with yet,
Had it utterly withered and perished
To rise not again as it set,
Shame were it that Englishmen living
Should read as their forefathers read
The books of the praise and thanksgiving
Of Englishmen dead.

O light of the land that adored thee
And kindled thy soul with her breath,
Whose life, such as fate would afford thee,
Was lovelier than aught but thy death,
By what name, could thy lovers but know it,
Might love of thee hail thee afar,
Philisides, Astrophel, poet
Whose love was thy star?

A star in the moondawn of Maytime,
A star in the cloudland of change;
Too splendid and sad for the daytime
To cheer or eclipse or estrange;
Too sweet for tradition or vision
To see but through shadows of tears
Rise deathless across the division
Of measureless years.

The twilight may deepen and harden
As nightward the stream of it runs
Till starshine transfigure a garden
Whose radiance responds to the sun's:
The light of the love of thee darkens
The lights that arise and that set:
The love that forgets thee not hearkens
If England forget.

II

Bright and brief in the sight of grief and love the light of thy lifetime shone,
Seen and felt by the gifts it dealt, the grace it gave, and again was gone:
Ay, but now it is death, not thou, whom time has conquered as years pass on.

Ay, not yet may the land forget that bore and loved thee and praised and wept,
Sidney, lord of the stainless sword, the name of names that her heart's love kept
Fast as thine did her own, a sign to light thy life till it sank and slept.

Bright as then for the souls of men thy brave Arcadia resounds and shines,
Lit with love that beholds above all joys and sorrows the steadfast signs,
Faith, a splendour that hope makes tender, and truth, whose presage the soul divines.

All the glory that girds the story of all thy life as
with sunlight round,
All the spell that on all souls fell who saw thy spirit,
and held them bound,
Lives for all that have heard the call and cadence yet
of its music sound.

Music bright as the soul of light, for wings an eagle,
for notes a dove,
Leaps and shines from the lustrous lines where-
through thy soul from afar above
Shone and sang till the darkness rang with light
whose fire is the fount of love.

Love that led thee alive, and fed thy soul with
sorrows and joys and fears,
Love that sped thee, alive and dead, to fame's fair
goal with thy peerless peers,
Feeds the flame of thy quenchless name with light
that lightens the rayless years.

Dark as sorrow though night and morrow may lower
with presage of clouded fame,
How may she that of old bare thee, may Sidney's
England, be brought to shame?
How should this be, while England is? What need
of answer beyond thy name?

III

From the love that transfigures thy glory,
From the light of the dawn of thy death,

The life of thy song and thy story
Took subtler and fierier breath.
And we, though the day and the morrow
Set fear and thanksgiving at strife,
Hail yet in the star of thy sorrow
The sun of thy life.

Shame and fear may beset men here, and bid thanksgiving and pride be dumb:
Faith, discrowned of her praise, and wound about with toils till her life wax numb,
Scarce may see if the sundawn be, if darkness die not and dayrise come.

But England, enmeshed and benetted
With spiritless villainies round,
With counsels of cowardice fretted,
With trammels of treason enwound,
Is yet, though the season be other
Than wept and rejoiced over thee,
Thine England, thy lover, thy mother,
Sublime as the sea.

Hers wast thou: if her face be now less bright, or seem for an hour less brave,
Let but thine on her darkness shine, thy saviour spirit revive and save,
Time shall see, as the shadows flee, her shame entombed in a shameful grave.

If death and not life were the portal
That opens on life at the last,

ASTROPHEL

If the spirit of Sidney were mortal
And the past of it utterly past,
Fear stronger than honour was ever,
Forgetfulness mightier than fame,
Faith knows not if England should never
Subside into shame.

Yea, but yet is thy sun not set, thy sunbright spirit of trust withdrawn:
England's love of thee burns above all hopes that darken or fears that fawn:
Hers thou art: and the faithful heart that hopes begets upon darkness dawn.

The sunset that sunrise will follow
Is less than the dream of a dream:
The starshine on height and on hollow
Sheds promise that dawn shall redeem:
The night, if the daytime would hide it,
Shows lovelier, aflame and afar,
Thy soul and thy Stella's beside it,
A star by a star.

A NYMPHOLEPT

Summer, and noon, and a splendour of silence, felt,
Seen, and heard of the spirit within the sense.
Soft through the frondage the shades of the sunbeams melt,
Sharp through the foliage the shafts of them, keen and dense,
Cleave, as discharged from the string of the God's bow, tense
As a war-steed's girth, and bright as a warrior's belt.
Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour pass hence?

I dare not sleep for delight of the perfect hour,
Lest God be wroth that his gift should be scorned of man.
The face of the warm bright world is the face of a flower,
The word of the wind and the leaves that the light winds fan
As the word that quickened at first into flame, and ran,
Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive power,
Through darkness and cloud, from the breath of the one God, Pan.

A NYMPHOLEPT

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun pervades
The chaster air that he soothes but with sense of sleep.
Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails and fades,
The passing noon that beholds not a cloudlet weep
Imbues and impregnates life with delight more deep
Than dawn or sunset or moonrise on lawns or glades
Can shed from the skies that receive it and may not keep.

The skies may hold not the splendour of sundown fast;
It wanes into twilight as dawn lies down into day.
And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately sway.
But the might of the noon, though the light of it pass away,
Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that last;
But if any there be that hath sense of them none can say.

For if any there be that hath sight of them, sense, or trust
Made strong by the might of a vision, the strength of a dream,
His lips shall straiten and close as a dead man's must,
His heart shall be sealed as the voice of a frost-bound stream.

For the deep mid mystery of light and of heat that seem
To clasp and pierce dark earth, and enkindle dust,
Shall a man's faith say what it is? or a man's guess deem?

Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all night
Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and trees.
Why now should the haze not open, and yield to sight
A fairer secret than hope or than slumber sees?
I seek not heaven with submission of lips and knees,
With worship and prayer for a sign till it leap to light:
I gaze on the gods about me, and call on these.

I call on the gods hard by, the divine dim powers
Whose likeness is here at hand, in the breathless air,
In the pulseless peace of the fervid and silent flowers,
In the faint sweet speech of the waters that whisper there.
Ah, what should darkness do in a world so fair?
The bent-grass heaves not, the couch-grass quails not or cowers;
The wind's kiss frets not the rowan's or aspen's hair.

But the silence trembles with passion of sound suppressed,
And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sunward, wrung
With love as with pain; and the wide wood's motionless breast
Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find tongue
And palpitates, tongueless as she whom a mansnake stung,
Whose heart now heaves in the nightingale, never at rest
Nor satiated ever with song till her last be sung.

Is it rapture or terror that circles me round, and invades
Each vein of my life with hope—if it be not fear?
Each pulse that awakens my blood into rapture fades,
Each pulse that subsides into dread of a strange thing near
Requickens with sense of a terror less dread than dear.
Is peace not one with light in the deep green glades
Where summer at noonday slumbers? Is peace not here?

The tall thin stems of the firs, and the roof sublime
That screens from the sun the floor of the steep still wood,
Deep, silent, splendid, and perfect and calm as time,
Stand fast as ever in sight of the night they stood,

When night gave all that moonlight and dewfall could.
The dense ferns deepen, the moss glows warm as the thyme:
The wild heath quivers about me: the world is good.

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maidenhair,
That bids fear creep as a snake through the woodlands, felt
In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,
In the stress of the sun? For here has the great God dwelt:
For hence were the shafts of his love or his anger dealt.
For here has his wrath been fierce as his love was fair,
When each was as fire to the darkness its breath bade melt.

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling noon,
That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,
As man for woman, as woman for man? Full soon,
If I live, and the life that may look on him drop not dead,
Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his tread,
The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's tune
Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.

A NYMPHOLEPT

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,
The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might,
Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,
Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light,
With harsher awe than breathes in the breath of night.
Have mercy, God who art all! For I know thee well,
How sharp is thine eye to lighten, thine hand to smite.

The whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee: but fear
So deep, so dim, so sacred, is wellnigh sweet.
For the light that hangs and broods on the woodlands here,
Intense, invasive, intolerant, imperious, and meet
To lighten the works of thine hands and the ways of thy feet,
Is hot with the fire of the breath of thy life, and dear
As hope that shrivels or shrinks not for frost or heat.

Thee, thee the supreme dim godhead, approved afar,
Perceived of the soul and conceived of the sense of man,
We scarce dare love, and we dare not fear: the star
We call the sun, that lit us when life began
To brood on the world that is thine by his grace for a span,

Conceals and reveals in the semblance of things that
are
Thine immanent presence, the pulse of thy heart's
life, Pan.

The fierce mid noon that wakens and warms the
snake
Conceals thy mercy, reveals thy wrath: and again
The dew-bright hour that assuages the twilight
brake
Conceals thy wrath and reveals thy mercy: then
Thou art fearful only for evil souls of men
That feel with nightfall the serpent within them
wake,
And hate the holy darkness on glade and glen.

Yea, then we know not and dream not if ill things be,
Or if aught of the work of the wrong of the world
be thine.
We hear not the footfall of terror that treads the
sea,
We hear not the moan of winds that assail the
pine:
We see not if shipwreck reign in the storm's dim
shrine;
If death do service and doom bear witness to thee
We see not,—know not if blood for thy lips be
wine.

But in all things evil and fearful that fear may
scan,
As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,

We know thee present and latent, the lord of man;
In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of winds that call
And wolves that howl for their prey; in the midnight's pall,
In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, O Pan,
And in each life living, O thou the God who art all.

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,
Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping, still
Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands
Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's wild will
That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-wind's mill.
In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that stands:
The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfil.

Where Etna shudders with passion and pain volcanic
That rend her heart as with anguish that rends a man's,
Where Typho labours, and finds not his thews Titanic,
In breathless torment that ever the flame's breath fans,
Men felt and feared thee of old, whose pastoral clans
Were given to the charge of thy keeping; and soundless panic
Held fast the woodland whose depths and whose heights were Pan's.

And here, though fear be less than delight, and awe
Be one with desire and with worship of earth and thee,
So mild seems now thy secret and speechless law,
So fair and fearless and faithful and godlike she,
So soft the spell of thy whisper on stream and sea,
Yet man should fear lest he see what of old men saw
And withered: yet shall I quail if thy breath smite me.

Lord God of life and of light and of all things fair,
Lord God of ravin and ruin and all things dim,
Death seals up life, and darkness the sunbright air,
And the stars that watch blind earth in the deep night swim
Laugh, saying, "What God is your God, that ye call on him?
What is man, that the God who is guide of our way should care
If day for a man be golden, or night be grim?"

But thou, dost thou hear? Stars too but abide for a span,
Gods too but endure for a season; but thou, if thou be
God, more than shadows conceived and adored of man,
Kind Gods and fierce, that bound him or made him free,
The skies that scorn us are less in thy sight than we,

Whose souls have strength to conceive and perceive thee, Pan,
With sense more subtle than senses that hear and see.

Yet may not it say, though it seek thee and think to find
One soul of sense in the fire and the frost-bound clod,
What heart is this, what spirit alive or blind,
That moves thee: only we know that the ways we trod
We tread, with hands unguided, with feet unshod,
With eyes unlightened; and yet, if with steadfast mind,
Perchance may we find thee and know thee at last for God.

Yet then should God be dark as the dawn is bright,
And bright as the night is dark on the world—no more.
Light slays not darkness, and darkness absorbs not light;
And the labour of evil and good from the years of yore
Is even as the labour of waves on a sunless shore.
And he who is first and last, who is depth and height,
Keeps silence now, as the sun when the woods wax hoar.

The dark dumb godhead innate in the fair world's life
Imbues the rapture of dawn and of noon with dread,

Infects the peace of the star-shod night with strife,
Informs with terror the sorrow that guards the dead.
No service of bended knee or of humbled head
May soothe or subdue the God who has change to wife:
And life with death is as morning with evening wed.

And yet, if the light and the life in the light that here
Seem soft and splendid and fervid as sleep may seem
Be more than the shine of a smile or the flash of a tear,
Sleep, change, and death are less than a spell-struck dream,
And fear than the fall of a leaf on a starlit stream.
And yet, if the hope that hath said it absorb not fear,
What helps it man that the stars and the waters gleam?

What helps it man, that the noon be indeed intense,
The night be indeed worth worship? Fear and pain
Were lords and masters yet of the secret sense,
Which now dares deem not that light is as darkness, fain
Though dark dreams be to declare it, crying in vain.
For whence, thou God of the light and the darkness, whence
Dawns now this vision that bids not the sunbeams wane?

What light, what shadow, diviner than dawn or night,
Draws near, makes pause, and again—or I dream
—draws near?
More soft than shadow, more strong than the strong
sun's light,
More pure than moonbeams—yea, but the rays
run sheer
As fire from the sun through the dusk of the pine-
wood, clear
And constant; yea, but the shadow itself is bright
That the light clothes round with love that is one
with fear.

Above and behind it the noon and the woodland lie,
Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and sub-
dued,
Triumphant in silence; and hardly the sacred sky
Seems free from the tyrannous weight of the dumb
fierce mood
Which rules as with fire and invasion of beams
that brood
The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by
And leave her spirit released and her peace re-
newed.

I sleep not: never in sleep has a man beholden
This. From the shadow that trembles and yearns
with light
Suppressed and elate and reluctant—obscure and
golden
As water kindled with presage of dawn or night—
A form, a face, a wonder to sense and sight,

Grows great as the moon through the month; and her eyes embolden
Fear, till it change to desire, and desire to delight.

I sleep not: sleep would die of a dream so strange;
A dream so sweet would die as a rainbow dies,
As a sunbow laughs and is lost on the waves that range
And reck not of light that flickers or spray that flies.
But the sun withdraws not, the woodland shrinks not or sighs,
No sweet thing sickens with sense or with fear of change;
Light wounds not, darkness blinds not, my steadfast eyes.

Only the soul in my sense that receives the soul
Whence now my spirit is kindled with breathless bliss
Knows well if the light that wounds it with love makes whole,
If hopes that carol be louder than fears that hiss,
If truth be spoken of flowers and of waves that kiss,
Of clouds and stars that contend for a sunbright goal.
And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of this?

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers aglow,
Breathe and brighten about me: the darkness gleams,
The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes below,
Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like dreams;
The silence thrills with the whisper of secret streams
That well from the heart of the woodland: these I know:
Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with showers and beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun
Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers: mine eyes

A NYMPHOLEPT

Close, and the goal of delight and of life is one:
No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.
No more? But the joy that springs from them smiles and flies:
The sweet work wrought of them surely, the good work done,
If the mind and the face of the season be loveless, dies.

Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to, cling,
If haply thy heart be kind and thy gifts be good,
Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood
That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed thing should,
In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king
Who stands where foes fled far from the face of him stood.

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,
Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out fear?
Pan's dim frown wanes, and his wild eyes brighten as thine,
Transformed as night or as day by the kindling year.
Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees, mine ear
That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,
Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me here.

The terror that whispers in darkness and flames in light,
The doubt that speaks in the silence of earth and sea,
The sense, more fearful at noon than in midmost night,
Of wrath scarce hushed and of imminent ill to be,
Where are they? Heaven is as earth, and as heaven to me
Earth: for the shadows that sundered them here take flight;
And nought is all, as am I, but a dream of thee.

ON THE SOUTH COAST

To Theodore Watts

Hills and valleys where April rallies his radiant
squadron of flowers and birds,
Steep strange beaches and lustrous reaches of fluctu-
ant sea that the land engirds,
Fields and downs that the sunrise crowns with life
diviner than lives in words,

Day by day of resurgent May salute the sun with
sublime acclaim,
Change and brighten with hours that lighten and
darken, girdled with cloud or flame;
Earth's fair face in alternate grace beams, blooms,
and lowers, and is yet the same.

Twice each day the divine sea's play makes glad with
glory that comes and goes
Field and street that her waves keep sweet, when
past the bounds of their old repose,
Fast and fierce in renewed reverse, the foam-flecked
estuary ebbs and flows.

Broad and bold through the stays of old staked fast
with trunks of the wildwood tree,
Up from shoreward, impelled far forward, by marsh
and meadow, by lawn and lea,
Inland still at her own wild will swells, rolls, and
revels the surging sea.

Strong as time, and as faith sublime,—clothed round
with shadows of hopes and fears,
Nights and morrows, and joys and sorrows, alive
with passion of prayers and tears,—
Stands the shrine that has seen decline eight hundred
waxing and waning years.

Tower set square to the storms of air and change of
season that glooms and glows,
Wall and roof of it tempest-proof, and equal ever to
suns and snows,
Bright with riches of radiant niches and pillars
smooth as a straight stem grows.

Aisle and nave that the whelming wave of time has
whelmed not or touched or neared,
Arch and vault without stain or fault, by hands of
craftsmen we know not reared,
Time beheld them, and time was quelled; and
change passed by them as one that feared.

Time that flies as a dream, and dies as dreams that
die with the sleep they feed,
Here alone in a garb of stone incarnate stands as a
god indeed,
Stern and fair, and of strength to bear all burdens
mortal to man's frail seed.

Men and years are as leaves or tears that storm or
sorrow is fain to shed:
These go by as the winds that sigh, and none takes
note of them quick or dead:
Time, whose breath is their birth and death, folds
here his pinions, and bows his head.

Still the sun that beheld begun the work wrought
here of unwearied hands
Sees, as then, though the Red King's men held
ruthless rule over lawless lands,
Stand their massive design, impassive, pure and
proud as a virgin stands.

Statelier still as the years fulfil their count, subserv-
ing her sacred state,
Grows the hoary grey church whose story silence
utters and age makes great:
Statelier seems it than shines in dreams the face un-
veiled of unvanquished fate.

Fate, more high than the star-shown sky, more deep
than waters unsounded, shines
Keen and far as the final star on souls that seek not
for charms or signs;
Yet more bright is the love-shown light of men's
hands lighted in songs or shrines.

Love and trust that the grave's deep dust can soil
not, neither may fear put out,
Witness yet that their record set stands fast, though
years be as hosts in rout,
Spent and slain; but the signs remain that beat
back darkness and cast forth doubt.

Men that wrought by the grace of thought and toil
things goodlier than praise dare trace,
Fair as all that the world may call most fair, save
only the sea's own face,
Shrines or songs that the world's change wrongs not,
live by grace of their own gift's grace.

Dead, their names that the night reclaims—alive,
their works that the day relumes
Sink and stand, as in stone and sand engraven: none
may behold their tombs:
Nights and days shall record their praise while here
this flower of their grafting blooms.

Flower more fair than the sun-thrilled air bids laugh
and lighten and wax and rise,
Fruit more bright than the fervent light sustains
with strength from the kindled skies,
Flower and fruit that the deathless root of man's
love rears though the man's name dies.

Stately stands it, the work of hands unknown of:
statelier, afar and near,
Rise around it the heights that bound our landward
gaze from the seaboard here;
Downs that swerve and aspire, in curve and change
of heights that the dawn holds dear.

Dawn falls fair on the grey walls there confronting
dawn, on the low green lea,
Lone and sweet as for fairies' feet held sacred, silent
and strange and free,
Wild and wet with its rills; but yet more fair falls
dawn on the fairer sea.

Eastward, round by the high green bound of hills
that fold the remote fields in,
Strive and shine on the low sea-line fleet waves and
beams when the days begin;
Westward glow, when the days burn low, the sun
that yields and the stars that win.

Rose-red eve on the seas that heave sinks fair as
dawn when the first ray peers;
Winds are glancing from sunbright Lancing to
Shoreham, crowned with the grace of years;
Shoreham, clad with the sunset, glad and grave with
glory that death reveres.

Death, more proud than the kings' heads bowed
before him, stronger than all things, bows
Here his head: as if death were dead, and kingship
plucked from his crownless brows,
Life hath here such a face of cheer as change appals
not and time avows.

Skies fulfilled with the sundown, stilled and splendid,
spread as a flower that spreads,
Pave with rarer device and fairer than heaven's the
luminous oyster-beds,
Grass-embanked, and in square plots ranked, inlaid
with gems that the sundown sheds.

Squares more bright and with lovelier light than
heaven that kindled it shines with shine
Warm and soft as the dome aloft, but heavenlier yet
than the sun's own shrine:
Heaven is high, but the water-sky lit here seems
deeper and more divine.

Flowers on flowers, that the whole world's bowers
may show not, here may the sunset show,
Lightly graven in the waters paven with ghostly gold
by the clouds aglow:
Bright as love is the vault above, but lovelier lightens
the wave below.

Rosy grey, or as fiery spray full-plumed, or greener
than emerald, gleams
Plot by plot as the skies allot for each its glory,
divine as dreams
Lit with fire of appeased desire which sounds the
secret of all that seems;

Dreams that show what we fain would know, and
know not save by the grace of sleep,
Sleep whose hands have removed the bands that eye
long waking and fain to weep
Feel fast bound on them—light around them strange,
and darkness above them steep.

Yet no vision that heals division of love from love,
and renews awhile
Life and breath in the lips where death has quenched
the spirit of speech and smile,
Shows on earth, or in heaven's mid mirth, where no
fears enter or doubts defile,

Aught more fair than the radiant air and water here
by the twilight wed,
Here made one by the waning sun whose last love
quickens to rosebright red
Half the crown of the soft high down that rears to
northward its wood-girt head.

There, when day is at height of sway, men's eyes
who stand, as we oft have stood,
High where towers with its world of flowers the
golden spinny that flanks the wood,
See before and around them shore and seaboard glad
as their gifts are good.

Higher and higher to the north aspire the green
smooth-swelling unending downs;
East and west on the brave earth's breast glow
girdle-jewels of gleaming towns;
Southward shining, the lands declining subside in
peace that the sea's light crowns.

Westward wide in its fruitful pride the plain lies
lordly with plenteous grace;
Fair as dawn's when the fields and lawns desire her
glitters the glad land's face:
Eastward yet is the sole sign set of elder days
and a lordlier race.

Down beneath us afar, where seethe in wilder weath-
er the tides aflow,
Hurled up hither and drawn down thither in quest of
rest that they may not know,
Still as dew on a flower the blue broad stream now
sleeps in the fields below.

Mild and bland in the fair green land it smiles, and
takes to its heart the sky;
Scarce the meads and the fens, the reeds and grasses,
still as they stand or lie,
Wear the palm of a statelier calm than rests on
waters that pass them by.

Yet shall these, when the winds and seas of equal
days and coequal nights
Rage, rejoice, and uplift a voice whose sound is even
as a sword that smites,
Felt and heard as a doomsman's word from seaward
reaches to landward heights,

Lift their heart up, and take their part of triumph,
swollen and strong with rage,
Rage elate with desire and great with pride that
tempest and storm assuage;
So their chime in the ear of time has rung from age
to rekindled age.

Fair and dear is the land's face here, and fair man's
work as a man's may be:
Dear and fair as the sunbright air is here the record
that speaks him free;
Free by birth of a sacred earth, and regent ever of all
the sea.

AN AUTUMN VISION

OCTOBER 31, 1889

Ζεφύρου γίγαντος αὔρᾳ

I

Is it Midsummer here in the heavens that illumine
October on earth?
Can the year, when his heart is fulfilled with desire
of the days of his mirth,
Redeem them, recall, or remember?
For a memory recalling the rapture of earth, and
redeeming the sky,
Shines down from the heights to the depths: will the
watchword of dawn be July
When to-morrow acclaims November?
The stern salutation of sorrow to death or repentance
to shame
Was all that the season was wont to accord her of
grace or acclaim;
No lightnings of love and of laughter.
But here, in the laugh of the loud west wind from
around and above,
In the flash of the waters beneath him, what sound
or what light but of love
Rings round him or leaps forth after?

II

Wind beloved of earth and sky and sea beyond all winds that blow,
Wind whose might in fight was England's on her mightiest warrior day,
South-west wind, whose breath for her was life, and fire to scourge her foe,
Steel to smite and death to drive him down an unreturning way,
Well-beloved and welcome, sounding all the clarions of the sky,
Rolling all the marshalled waters toward the charge that storms the shore,
We receive, acclaim, salute thee, we who live and dream and die,
As the mightiest mouth of song that ever spake acclaimed of yore.
We that live as they that perish praise thee, lord of cloud and wave,
Wind of winds, clothed on with darkness whence as lightning light comes forth,
We that know thee strong to guard and smite, to scatter and to save,
We to whom the south-west wind is dear as Athens held the north.
He for her waged war as thou for us against all powers defiant,
Fleets full-fraught with storm from Persia, laden deep with death from Spain:

Thee the giant god of song and battle hailed as god and giant,
Yet not his but ours the land is whence thy praise should ring and rain;
Rain as rapture shed from song, and ring as trumpets blown for battle,
Sound and sing before thee, loud and glad as leaps and sinks the sea:
Yea, the sea's white steeds are curbed and spurred of thee, and pent as cattle,
Yet they laugh with love and pride to live, subdued not save of thee.
Ears that hear thee hear in heaven the sound of widening wings gigantic,
Eyes that see the cloud-lift westward see thy darkening brows divine;
Wings whose measure is the limit of the limitless Atlantic,
Brows that bend, and bid the sovereign sea submit her soul to thine.

III

Twelve days since is it—twelve days gone,
Lord of storm, that a storm-bow shone
Higher than sweeps thy sublime dark wing,
Fair as dawn is and sweet like spring?

Never dawn in the deep wide east
Spread so splendid and strange a feast,
Whence the soul as it drank and fed
Felt such rapture of wonder shed.

Never spring in the wild wood's heart
Felt such flowers at her footfall start,
Born of earth, as arose on sight
Born of heaven and of storm and light.

Stern and sullen, the grey grim sea
Swelled and strove as in toils, though free,
Free as heaven, and as heaven sublime,
Clear as heaven of the toils of time.

IV

Suddenly, sheer from the heights to the depths of the sky and the sea,
Sprang from the darkness alive as a vision of life to be
Glory triune and transcendent of colour afar and afire,
Arching and darkening the darkness with light as of dream or desire.
Heaven, in the depth of its height, shone wistful and wan from above:
Earth from beneath, and the sea, shone stricken and breathless with love.
As a shadow may shine, so shone they; as ghosts of the viewless blest,
That sleep hath sight of alive in a rapture of sun-bright rest,
The green earth glowed and the grey sky gleamed for a wondrous while;
And the storm's full frown was crossed by the light of its own deep smile.

As the darkness of thought and of passion is touched
by the light that gives
Life deathless as love from the depth of a spirit that
sees and lives,
From the soul of a seer and a singer, wherein as a
scroll unfurled
Lies open the scripture of light and of darkness, the
word of the world,
So, shapeless and measureless, lurid as anguish and
haggard as crime,
Pale as the front of oblivion and dark as the heart of
time,
The wild wan heaven at its height was assailed and
subdued and made
More fair than the skies that know not of storm and
endure not shade.
The grim sea-swell, grey, sleepless, and sad as a soul
estranged,
Shone, smiled, took heart, and was glad of its wrath:
and the world's face changed.

V

Up from moorlands northward gleaming
Even to heaven's transcendent height,
Clothed with massive cloud, and seeming
All one fortress reared of night,
Down to where the deep sea dreaming
Angry dreams, lay dark and white,
White as death and dark as fate,
Heaving with the strong wind's weight,
Sad with stormy pride of state,
One full rainbow shone elate.

AN AUTUMN VISION

Up from inmost memory's dwelling
  Where the light of life abides,
Where the past finds tongue, foretelling
  Time that comes and grace that guides,
Power that saves and sways, compelling
  Souls that ebb and flow like tides,
Shone or seemed to shine and swim
Through the cloud-surf great and grim,
Thought's live surge, the soul of him
By whose light the sun looks dim.

In what synod were they sitting,
  All the gods and lords of time,
Whence they watched as fen-fires flitting
  Years and names of men sublime,
When their counsels found it fitting
  One should stand where none might climb—
None of man begotten, none
Born of men beneath the sun
Till the race of time be run,
Save this heaven-enfranchised one?

With what rapture of creation
  Was the soul supernal thrilled,
With what pride of adoration
  Was the world's heart fired and filled,
Heaved in heavenward exaltation
  Higher than hopes or dreams might build,
Grave with awe not known while he
Was not, mad with glorious glee
As the sun-saluted sea,
When his hour bade Shakespeare be?

VI

There, clear as night beholds her crowning seven,
The sea beheld his likeness set in heaven.
The shadow of his spirit full in sight
Shone: for the shadow of that soul is light.
Nor heaven alone bore witness: earth avowed
Him present, and acclaimed of storm aloud.
From the arching sky to the ageless hills and sea
The whole world, visible, audible, was he:
Each part of all that wove that wondrous whole
The raiment of the presence of his soul.
The sun that smote and kissed the dark to death
Spake, smiled, and strove, like song's triumphant breath;
The soundless cloud whose thunderous heart was dumb
Swelled, lowered, and shrank to feel its conqueror come.
Yet high from heaven its empire vast and vain
Frowned, and renounced not night's reluctant reign.
The serpentine swift sounds and shapes wherein
The stainless sea mocks earth and death and sin,
Crawls dark as craft, or flashes keen as hate,
Subdued and insubmissive, strong like fate
And weak like man, bore wrathful witness yet
That storms and sins are more than suns that set;
That evil everlasting, girt for strife
Eternal, wars with hope as death with life.
The dark sharp shifting wind that bade the waves
Falter, lose heart, bow down like foes made slaves,

And waxed within more bitter as they bowed,
Baffling the sea, swallowing the sun with cloud,
Devouring fast as fire on earth devours
And hungering hard as frost that feeds on flowers,
Clothed round with fog that reeked as fume from hell,
And darkening with its miscreative spell
Light, glad and keen and splendid as the sword
Whose heft had known Othello's hand its lord,
Spake all the soul that hell drew back to greet
And felt its fire shrink shuddering from his feet.
Far off the darkness darkened, and recoiled,
And neared again, and triumphed: and the coiled
Colourless cloud and sea discoloured grew
Conscious of horror huge as heaven, and knew
Where Goneril's soul made chill and foul the mist,
And all the leprous life in Regan hissed.
Fierce homeless ghosts, rejected of the pit,
From hell to hell of storm fear watched them flit.
About them and before, the dull grey gloom
Shuddered, and heaven seemed hateful as the tomb
That shrinks from resurrection; and from out
That sullen hell which girt their shades about
The nether soul that lurks and lowers within
Man, made of dust and fire and shame and sin,
Breathed: all the cloud that felt it breathe and blight
Was blue as plague or black as thunderous night.
Elect of hell, the children of his hate
Thronged, as to storm sweet heaven's triumphal gate.

The terror of his giving rose and shone
Imminent: life had put its likeness on.
But higher than all its horrent height of shade
Shone sovereign, seen by light itself had made,
Above the woes of all the world, above
Life, sin, and death, his myriad-minded love.
From landward heights whereon the radiance leant
Full-fraught from heaven, intense and imminent,
To depths wherein the seething strengths of cloud
Scarce matched the wrath of waves whereon they bowed,
From homeborn pride and kindling love of home
To the outer skies and seas of fire and foam,
From splendour soft as dew that sundawn thrills
To gloom that shudders round the world it fills,
From midnights murmuring round Titania's ear
To midnights maddening round the rage of Lear,
The wonder woven of storm and sun became
One with the light that lightens from his name.
The music moving on the sea that felt
The storm-wind even as snows of springtide melt
Was blithe as Ariel's hand or voice might make
And bid all grief die gladly for its sake.
And there the soul alive in ear and eye
That watched the wonders of an hour pass by
Saw brighter than all stars that heaven inspheres
The silent splendour of Cordelia's tears,
Felt in the whispers of the quickening wind
The radiance of the laugh of Rosalind,
And heard, in sounds that melt the souls of men
With love of love, the tune of Imogen.

VII

For the strong north-east is not strong to subdue
and to slay the divine south-west,
And the darkness is less than the light that it
darkens, and dies in reluctant rest.
It hovers and hangs on the labouring and trembling
ascent of the dawn from the deep,
Till the sun's eye quicken the world and the waters,
and smite it again into sleep.
Night, holy and starry, the fostress of souls, with the
fragrance of heaven in her breath,
Subdues with the sense of her godhead the forces and
mysteries of sorrow and death.
Eternal as dawn's is the comfort she gives: but the
mist that beleaguers and slays
Comes, passes, and is not: the strength of it withers,
appalled or assuaged by the day's.
Faith, haggard as Fear that had borne her, and dark
as the sire that begat her, Despair,
Held rule on the soul of the world and the song of it
saddening through ages that were;
Dim centuries that darkened and brightened and
darkened again, and the soul of their song
Was great as their grief, and sublime as their
suffering, and strong as their sorrows were
strong.
It knew not, it saw not, but shadows triune, and
evoked by the strength of their spell
Dark hell, and the mountain of anguish, and heaven
that was hollower and harder than hell.

These are not: the womb of the darkness that bare
them rejects them, and knows them no more:
Thought, fettered in misery and iron, revives in the
light that it lived in of yore.
For the soul that is wisdom and freedom, the spirit
of England redeemed from her past,
Speaks life through the lips of the master and lord
of her children, the first and the last.
Thought, touched by his hand and redeemed by his
breath, sees, hears, and accepts from above
The limitless lightnings of vision and passion, the
measureless music of love.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

NOVEMBER 4, 1889

Somno mollior unda

I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,
  Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.
Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,
  Fair and flawless from face to feet,
Hailed of all when the world was golden,
Loved of lovers whose names beholden
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden
  Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,
  Souls that hear not her word in vain,
Earth beside her and heaven above her
  Seem but shadows that wax and wane.
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,
Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses
  Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

All the strength of the waves that perish
  Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,
  Laughs to know that it lives and dies,
Dies for joy of its life, and lives
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives
  Change that bids it subside and rise.

II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,
  Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering
  Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.
Dawn and even and noon are one,
Veiled with vapour and void of sun;
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing
  Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,
  Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,
  Touched by dawn or subdued by night.
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,
Swings the rollers to westward, clad
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,
  Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,
  Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,
Fill the world of the skies whereunder
  Heaves and quivers and pants aloud

All the world of the waters, hoary
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder
With light more living and word more proud.

III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,
Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves whose glee
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that leaves them free,
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,
Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet it seems
Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and streams
Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and bowed,
Warped and wrinkled: here the days are fair as dreams.

IV

O russet-robed November,
What ails thee so to smile?
Chill August, pale September,
Endured a woful while,
And fell as falls an ember
From forth a flameless pile:
But golden-girt November
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning
As wanes the morning moon,
Here falling, here refraining,
Outbraves the pride of June
With statelier semblance, feigning
No fear lest death be soon:
As though the woods thus waning
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken
By grey December's breath,
These lordlier growths that sicken
And die for fear of death
Should feel the sense requicken
That hears what springtide saith
And thrills for love, spring-stricken
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter
That stings and spurs thy sea
Doth yet but feed and feast her
With glowing sense of glee:
Calm chained her, storm released her,
And storm's glad voice was he:
South-wester or north-easter,
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

V

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?
A day-born dream of divine unreason,
A marvel moulded of sleep—no more?

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving
  Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
  A peace more happy than lives on land,
Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure
  The dreaming head and the steering hand,
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,
The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
  And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture
  Falls as from heaven that its light feet clomb,
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture
  Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.
To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—
Such joy the vision of man saw never;
For here too soon will a dark day sever
  The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer
  At once and brighter than dreams that flee,
The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer
  Abides, remembered as truth may be.
Not all the joy and not all the glory
Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary;
  For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,
  And here to south of them swells the sea.

GRACE DARLING

Take, O star of all our seas, from not an alien hand,
Homage paid of song bowed down before thy glory's face,
Thou the living light of all our lovely stormy strand,
Thou the brave north-country's very glory of glories, Grace.

Loud and dark about the lighthouse rings and glares the night;
Glares with foam-lit gloom and darkling fire of storm and spray,
Rings with roar of winds in chase and rage of waves in flight,
Howls and hisses as with mouths of snakes and wolves at bay.
Scarce the cliffs of the islets, scarce the walls of Joyous Gard,
Flash to sight between the deadlier lightnings of the sea:
Storm is lord and master of a midnight evil-starred,
Nor may sight or fear discern what evil stars may be.

Dark as death and white as snow the sea-swell
scowls and shines,
Heaves and yearns and pants for prey, from raven-
ing lip to lip,
Strong in rage of rapturous anguish, lines on hurt-
ling lines,
Ranks on charging ranks, that break and rend the
battling ship.
All the night is mad and murderous: who shall front
the night?
Not the prow that labours, helpless as a storm-
blown leaf,
Where the rocks and waters, darkling depth and
beetling height,
Rage with wave on shattering wave and thunder-
ing reef on reef.
Death is fallen upon the prisoners there of darkness,
bound
Like as thralls with links of iron fast in bonds of
doom;
How shall any way to break the bands of death be
found,
Any hand avail to pluck them from that raging
tomb?
All the night is great with child of death: no stars
above
Show them hope in heaven, no lights from shores
ward help on earth.
Is there help or hope to seaward, is there help in
love,
Hope in pity, where the ravening hounds of storm
make mirth?

Where the light but shows the naked eyeless face of Death
Nearer, laughing dumb and grim across the loud live storm?
Not in human heart or hand or speech of human breath,
Surely, nor in saviours found of mortal face or form.
Yet below the light, between the reefs, a skiff shot out
Seems a sea-bird fain to breast and brave the strait fierce pass
Whence the channelled roar of waters driven in raging rout,
Pent and pressed and maddened, speaks their monstrous might and mass.
Thunder heaves and howls about them, lightning leaps and flashes,
Hard at hand, not high in heaven, but close between the walls
Heaped and hollowed of the storms of old, whence reels and crashes
All the rage of all the unbaffled wave that breaks and falls.
Who shall thwart the madness and the gladness of it, laden
Full with heavy fate, and joyous as the birds that whirl?
Nought in heaven or earth, if not one mortal-moulded maiden,
Nought if not the soul that glorifies a northland girl.

Not the rocks that break may baffle, not the reefs that thwart
Stay the ravenous rapture of the waves that crowd and leap;
Scarce their flashing laughter shows the hunger of their heart,
Scarce their lion-throated roar the wrath at heart they keep.
Child and man and woman in the grasp of death clenched fast
Tremble, clothed with darkness round about, and scarce draw breath,
Scarce lift eyes up toward the light that saves not, scarce may cast
Thought or prayer up, caught and trammelled in the snare of death.
Not as sea-mews cling and laugh or sun their plumes and sleep
Cling and cower the wild night's waifs of shipwreck, blind with fear,
Where the fierce reef scarce yields foothold that a bird might keep,
And the clamorous darkness deadens eye and deafens ear.
Yet beyond their helpless hearing, out of hopeless sight,
Saviours, armed and girt upon with strength of heart, fare forth,
Sire and daughter, hand on oar and face against the night,
Maid and man whose names are beacons ever to the North.

Nearer now; but all the madness of the storming surf
Hounds and roars them back; but roars and hounds them back in vain:
As a pleasure-skiff may graze the lake-embanking turf,
So the boat that bears them grates the rock whereto ward they strain.
Dawn as fierce and haggard as the face of night scarce guides
Toward the cries that rent and clove the darkness, crying for aid,
Hours on hours, across the engorged reluctance of the tides,
Sire and daughter, high-souled man and mightier-hearted maid,
Not the bravest land that ever breasted war's grim sea,
Hurled her foes back harried on the lowlands whence they came,
Held her own and smote her smiters down, while such durst be,
Shining northward, shining southward, as the aurorean flame,
Not our mother, not Northumberland, brought ever forth,
Though no southern shore may match the sons that kiss her mouth,
Children worthier all the brithright given of the ardent north
Where the fire of hearts outburns the suns that fire the south.

Even such fire was this that lit them, not from lowering skies
Where the darkling dawn flagged, stricken in the sun's own shrine,
Down the gulf of storm subsiding, till their earnest eyes
Find the relics of the ravening night that spared but nine.
Life by life the man redeems them, head by storm-worn head,
While the girl's hand stays the boat whereof the waves are fain:
Ah, but woe for one, the mother clasping fast her dead!
Happier, had the surges slain her with her children slain.
Back they bear, and bring between them safe the woful nine,
Where above the ravenous Hawkers fixed at watch for prey
Storm and calm behold the Longstone's towering signal shine
Now as when that labouring night brought forth a shuddering day.
Now as then, though like the hounds of storm against her snarling
All the clamorous years between us storm down many a fame,
As our sires beheld before us we behold Grace Darling
Crowned and throned our queen, and as they hailed we hail her name.

Nay, not ours alone, her kinsfolk born, though
chiefliest ours,
East and west and south acclaim her queen of
England's maids,
Star more sweet than all their stars and flower than
all their flowers,
Higher in heaven and earth than star than sets or
flower that fades.
How should land or sea that nurtured her forget, or
love
Hold not fast her fame for us while aught is borne
in mind?
Land and sea beneath us, sun and moon and stars
above,
Bear the bright soul witness, seen of all but souls
born blind.
Stars and moon and sun may wax and wane, subside
and rise,
Age on age as flake on flake of showering snows be
shed:
Not till earth be sunless, not till death strike blind
the skies,
May the deathless love that waits on deathless
deeds be dead.

Years on years have withered since beside the
hearth once thine
I, too young to have seen thee, touched thy
father's hallowed hand:
Thee and him shall all men see for ever, stars that shine
While the sea that spared thee girds and glorifies
the land.

LOCH TORRIDON

To E. H.

The dawn of night more fair than morning rose,
Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows
Haste when the wind and winter bid them speed.
Vague miles of moorland road behind us lay
Scarce traversed ere the day
Sank, and the sun forsook us at our need,
Belated. Where we thought to have rested, rest
Was none; for soft Maree's dim quivering breast,
Bound round with gracious inland girth of green
And fearless of the wild wave-wandering West,
Shone shelterless for strangers; and unseen
The goal before us lay
Of all our blithe and strange and strenuous day.

For when the northering road faced westward—
when
The dark sharp sudden gorge dropped seaward—
then,
Beneath the stars, between the steeps, the track
We followed, lighted not of moon or sun,
And plunging whither none

Might guess, while heaven and earth were hoar and
black,
Seemed even the dim still pass whence none turns
back:
And through the twilight leftward of the way,
And down the dark, with many a laugh and leap,
The light blithe hill-streams shone from scaur to steep
In glittering pride of play;
And ever while the night grew great and deep
We felt but saw not what the hills would keep
Sacred awhile from sense of moon or star;
And full and far
Beneath us, sweet and strange as heaven may be,
The sea.

The very sea: no mountain-moulded lake
Whose fluctuant shapeliness is fain to take
Shape from the steadfast shore that rules it round,
And only from the storms a casual sound:
The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime
The supreme heart of music deep as time,
And in her spirit strong
The spirit of all imaginable song.

Not a whisper or lisp from the waters: the skies
were not silenter. Peace
Was between them; a passionless rapture of respite
as soft as release.
Not a sound, but a sense that possessed and per-
vaded with patient delight
The soul and the body, clothed round with the com-
fort of limitless night.

Night infinite, living, adorable, loved of the land and the sea:
Night, mother of mercies, who saith to the spirits in prison, Be free.
And softer than dewfall, and kindlier than starlight, and keener than wine,
Came round us the fragrance of waters, the life of the breath of the brine.
We saw not, we heard not, the face or the voice of the waters: we knew
By the darkling delight of the wind as the sense of the sea in it grew,
By the pulse of the darkness about us enkindled and quickened, that here,
Unseen and unheard of us, surely the goal we had faith in was near.
A silence diviner than music, a darkness diviner than light,
Fulfilled as from heaven with a measureless comfort the measure of night.

But never a roof for shelter
And never a sign for guide
Rose doubtful or visible: only
And hardly and gladly we heard
The soft waves whisper and welter,
Subdued, and allured to subside,
By the mild night's magic: the lonely
Sweet silence was soothed, not stirred,
By the noiseless noise of the gleaming
Glad ripples, that played and sighed,

Kissed, laughed, recoiled, and relented,
Whispered, flickered, and fled.
No season was this for dreaming
How oft, with a stormier tide,
Had the wrath of the winds been vented
On sons of the tribes long dead:
The tribes whom time, and the changes
Of things, and the stress of doom,
Have erased and effaced; forgotten
As wrecks or weeds of the shore
In sight of the stern hill-ranges
That hardly may change their gloom
When the fruits of the years wax rotten
And the seed of them springs no more.
For the dim strait footway dividing
The waters that breathed below
Led safe to the kindliest of shelters
That ever awoke into light:
And still in remembrance abiding
Broods over the stars that glow
And the water that eddies and welters
The passionate peace of the night.

All night long, in the world of sleep,
Skies and waters were soft and deep:
Shadow clothed them, and silence made
Soundless music of dream and shade:
All above us, the livelong night,
Shadow, kindled with sense of light;
All around us, the brief night long,
Silence, laden with sense of song.

Stars and mountains without, we knew,
Watched and waited, the soft night through:
All unseen, but divined and dear,
Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near:
All unheard, but alive like sound,
Throbbed the sense of the sea's life round:
Round us, near us, in depth and height,
Soft as darkness and keen as light.

And the dawn leapt in at my casement: and there,
as I rose, at my feet
No waves of the landlocked waters, no lake sub-
missive and sweet,
Soft slave of the lordly seasons, whose breath may
loose it or freeze;
But to left and to right and ahead was the ripple
whose pulse is the sea's.
From the gorge we had travelled by starlight the
sunrise, winged and aflame,
Shone large on the live wide wavelets that shuddered
with joy as it came;
As it came and caressed and possessed them, till
panting and laughing with light
From mountain to mountain the water was kindled
and stung to delight.
And the grey gaunt heights that embraced and con-
strained and compelled it were glad,
And the rampart of rock, stark naked, that thwarted
and barred it, was clad
With a stern gray splendour of sunrise: and scarce
had I sprung to the sea
When the dawn and the water were wedded, the hills
and the sky set free.

The chain of the night was broken: the waves that
embraced me and smiled
And flickered and fawned in the sunlight, alive, un-
afraid, undefiled,
Were sweeter to swim in than air, though fulfilled
with the mounting morn,
Could be for the birds whose triumph rejoiced that a
day was born.

And a day was arisen indeed for us. Years and the
changes of years
Clothed round with their joys and their sorrows,
and dead as their hopes and their fears,
Lie noteless and nameless, unlit by remembrance or
record of days
Worth wonder or memory, or cursing or blessing, or
passion or praise,
Between us who live and forget not, but yearn with
delight in it yet,
And the day we forget not, and never may live and
may think to forget.
And the years that were kindlier and fairer, and
kindled with pleasures as keen,
Have eclipsed not with lights or with shadows the
light on the face of it seen.
For softly and surely, as nearer the boat that we
gazed from drew,
The face of the precipice opened and bade us as
birds pass through,
And the bark shot sheer to the sea through the strait
of the sharp steep cleft,
The portal that opens with imminent rampires to
right and to left,

LOCH TORRIDON

Sublime as the sky they darken and strange as a
spell-struck dream,
On the world unconfined of the mountains, the reign
of the sea supreme,
The kingdom of westward waters, wherein when we
swam we knew
The waves that we clove were boundless, the wind
on our brows that blew
Had swept no land and no lake, and had warred not
on tower or on tree,
But came on us hard out of heaven, and alive with
the soul of the sea.

THE PALACE OF PAN

INSCRIBED TO MY MOTHER

SEPTEMBER, all glorious with gold, as a king
In the radiance of triumph attired,
Outlightening the summer, outsweetening the spring,
Broods wide on the woodlands with limitless wing,
A presence of all men desired.

Far eastward and westward the sun-coloured lands
Smile warm as the light on them smiles;
And statelier than temples upbuilded with hands,
Tall column by column, the sanctuary stands
Of the pine-forest's infinite aisles.

Mute worship, too fervent for praise or for prayer,
Possesses the spirit with peace,
Fulfilled with the breath of the luminous air,
The fragrance, the silence, the shadows as fair
As the rays that recede or increase.

Ridged pillars that redden aloft and aloof,
With never a branch for a nest,
Sustain the sublime indivisible roof,
To the storm and the sun in his majesty proof,
And awful as waters at rest.

Man's hand hath not measured the height of them; thought
May measure not, awe may not know;
In its shadow the woofs of the woodland are wrought;
As a bird is the sun in the toils of them caught,
And the flakes of it scattered as snow.

As the shreds of a plumage of gold on the ground
The sun-flakes by multitudes lie,
Shed loose as the petals of roses discrowned
On the floors of the forest engilt and embrowned
And reddened afar and anigh.

Dim centuries with darkling inscrutable hands
Have reared and secluded the shrine
For gods that we know not, and kindled as brands
On the altar the years that are dust, and their sands
Time's glass has forgotten for sign.

A temple whose transepts are measured by miles,
Whose chancel has morning for priest,
Whose floor-work the foot of no spoiler defiles,
Whose musical silence no music beguiles,
No festivals limit its feast.

The noon's ministration, the night's and the dawn's,
Conceals not, reveals not for man,
On the slopes of the herbless and blossomless lawns,
Some track of a nymph's or some trail of a faun's
To the place of the slumber of Pan.

THE PALACE OF PAN

Thought, kindled and quickened by worship and wonder
To rapture too sacred for fear
On the ways that unite or divide them in sunder,
Alone may discern if about them or under
Be token or trace of him here.

With passionate awe that is deeper than panic
The spirit subdued and unshaken
Takes heed of the godhead terrene and Titanic
Whose footfall is felt on the breach of volcanic
Sharp steeps that their fire has forsaken.

By a spell more serene than the dim necromantic
Dead charms of the past and the night,
Or the terror that lurked in the noon to make frantic
Where Etna takes shape from the limbs of gigantic
Dead gods disanointed of might,

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath
Makes noon in the woodland sublime
Abides as entranced in a presence that saith
Things loftier than life and serener than death,
Triumphant and silent as time.

Pine Ridge: *September* 1893.

A YEAR'S CAROLS

JANUARY

Hail, January, that bearest here
On snowbright breasts the babe-faced year
  That weeps and trembles to be born.
Hail, maid and mother, strong and bright,
Hooded and cloaked and shod with white,
  Whose eyes are stars that match the morn.
Thy forehead braves the storm's bent bow,
Thy feet enkindle stars of snow.

FEBRUARY

Wan February with weeping cheer,
Whose cold hand guides the youngling year
  Down misty roads of mire and rime,
Before thy pale and fitful face
The shrill wind shifts the clouds apace
  Through skies the morning scarce may climb.
Thine eyes are thick with heavy tears,
But lit with hopes that light the year's.

MARCH

Hail, happy March, whose foot on earth
Rings as the blast of martial mirth
  When trumpets fire men's hearts for fray.
No race of wild things winged or finned
May match the might that wings thy wind
  Through air and sea, through scud and spray.
Strong joy and thou were powers twin-born
Of tempest and the towering morn.

APRIL

Crowned April, king whose kiss bade earth
Bring forth to time her lordliest birth
  When Shakespeare from thy lips drew breath
And laughed to hold in one soft hand
A spell that bade the world's wheel stand,
  And power on life, and power on death,
With quiring suns and sunbright showers
Praise him, the flower of all thy flowers.

MAY

Hail, May, whose bark puts forth full-sailed
For summer; May, whom Chaucer hailed
  With all his happy might of heart,
And gave thy rosebright daisy-tips
Strange fragrance from his amorous lips
  That still thine own breath seems to part
And sweeten till each word they say
Is even a flower of flowering May.

JUNE

Strong June, superb, serene, elate
With conscience of thy sovereign state
  Untouched of thunder, though the storm
Scathe here and there thy shuddering skies
And bid its lightning cross thine eyes
  With fire, thy golden hours inform
Earth and the souls of men with life
That brings forth peace from shining strife.

JULY

Hail, proud July, whose fervent mouth
Bids even be morn and north be south
  By grace and gospel of thy word,
Whence all the splendour of the sea
Lies breathless with delight in thee
  And marvel at the music heard
From the ardent silent lips of noon
And midnight's rapturous plenilune.

AUGUST

Great August, lord of golden lands,
Whose lordly joy through seas and strands
  And all the red-ripe heart of earth
Strikes passion deep as life, and stills
The folded vales and folding hills
  With gladness too divine for mirth,
The gracious glories of thine eyes
Makes night a noon where darkness dies.

SEPTEMBER

Hail, kind September, friend whose grace
Renews the bland year's bounteous face
With largess given of corn and wine
Through many a land that laughs with love
Of thee and all the heaven above,
More fruitful found than all save thine
Whose skies fulfil with strenuous cheer
The fervent fields that knew thee near.

OCTOBER

October of the tawny crown,
Whose heavy-laden hands drop down
Blessing, the bounties of thy breath
And mildness of thy mellowing might
Fill earth and heaven with love and light
Too sweet for fear to dream of death
Or memory, while thy joy lives yet,
To know what joy would fain forget.

NOVEMBER

Hail, soft November, though thy pale
Sad smile rebuke the words that hail
Thy sorrow with no sorrowing words
Or gratulate thy grief with song
Less bitter than the winds that wrong
Thy withering woodlands, where the birds
Keep hardly heart to sing or see
How fair thy faint wan face may be.

DECEMBER

December, thou whose hallowing hands
On shuddering seas and hardening lands
  Set as a sacramental sign
The seal of Christmas felt on earth
As witness toward a new year's birth
  Whose promise makes thy death divine,
The crowning joy that comes of thee
Makes glad all grief on land or sea.

ENGLAND: AN ODE

I

Sea and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-tides rolling and rising sun
Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with day when day that was here is done,
Call aloud on their children, proud with trust that future and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the storm-birds bred of her fair white breast,
Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam, have borne the fame of her east and west;
North and south has the storm-wind's mouth rung praise of England and England's quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore to fly with an equal wing:
France and Spain with their warrior train bowed down before her as thrall to king;
India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more fruitful of life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off from races of elder name,
Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids freedom lighten and burn as flame;
Night endures not the touch that cures of kingship tyrants, and slaves of shame.

All the terror of time, where error and fear were lords
of a world of slaves,
Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish darkening
as waves on waves,
Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace as
quickens the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight: the
strengths of darkness recoiled and sank:
Sank the fires of the murderous pyres whereon wild
agony writhed and shrank:
Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs of
years that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence glory
lightens and music rings,
Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite and still
the discord of evil things,
Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but darkened
now by her sail-stretched wings.

II

Music made of change and conquest, glory born of
evil slain,
Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade the lights
of tempest wane,
Where the deathless dawn of England rose in sign
that right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with
blood and lust,
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves
allowed it just,
Rose as England's light on Asia rose, and smote
them down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice with
her sword,
Smote and saved and raised and ruined, till the
tyrant-ridden horde
Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew the
sun for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the
smile of England shines,
Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair
as hope divines
Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier
stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's
voice and Nelson's hand,
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our
chosen and chainless land,
Bear us witness: come the world against her,
England yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who
said it; he
Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp,
and herb and flower and tree
Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more
than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be
but true,
Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none
should bid her rue;
None may speak as he: but all may know the sign
that Shakespeare knew.

III

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the
noon, from the heights of the night that shine,
Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found
but in England her throne and her shrine,
Speak louder than song may proclaim them, that
here is the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the
land that is one with the sea
Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at
heart was not inly free
The word of command that assures us of life, if we
will but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men who
behold unashamed the sun
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of
the years and the wars that are done,
The token that all who are born of its blood should
in heart as in blood be one.

ENGLAND: AN ODE

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from
the steeps of the storm-lit past
Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm
as they held it fast:
That the glory which was from the first upon
England alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith
may not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,
That shines for her sons and that burns for her foe-
men as fire of the night or the morn:
That the births of her womb may forget not the sign
of the glory wherein they were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is
brighter than morning's breath,
Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her,
and answers the word that it saith;
The word that assures her of life if she change not,
and choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate
in hope and in fear to be:
Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether
hope be not blind as she:
But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal,
and girdled with life by the sea.

ETON: AN ODE

FOR THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE

I

Four hundred summers and fifty have shone on the meadows of Thames and died
Since Eton arose in an age that was darkness, and shone by his radiant side
As a star that the spell of a wise man's word bade live and ascend and abide.

And ever as time's flow brightened, a river more dark than the storm-clothed sea,
And age upon age rose fairer and larger in promise of hope set free,
With England Eton her child kept pace as a fostress of men to be.

And ever as earth waxed wiser, and softer the beating of time's wide wings,
Since fate fell dark on her father, most hapless and gentlest of star-crossed kings,
Her praise has increased as the chant of the dawn that the choir of the noon outsings.

II

Storm and cloud in the skies were loud, and lightning mocked at the blind sun's light;
War and woe on the hand below shed heavier shadow than falls from night;
Dark was earth at her dawn of birth as here her record of praise is bright.

Clear and fair through her morning air the light first laugh of the sunlit stage
Rose and rang as a fount that sprang from depths yet dark with a spent storm's rage,
Loud and glad as a boy's, and bade the sunrise open on Shakespeare's age.

Lords of state and of war, whom fate found strong in battle, in counsel strong,
Here, ere fate had approved them great, abode their season, and thought not long:
Here too first was the lark's note nursed that filled and flooded the skies with song.

III

Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest singers, here first heard
Ring from lips of poets crowned and dead the Promethean word
Whence his soul took fire, and power to outsoar the sunward-soaring bird.

Still the reaches of the river, still the light on field
and hill,
Still the memories held aloft as lamps for hope's
young fire to fill,
Shine, and while the light of England lives shall
shine for England still.

When four hundred more and fifty years have risen
and shone and set,
Bright with names that men remember, loud with
names that men forget,
Haply here shall Eton's record be what England
finds it yet.

THE UNION

I

THREE in one, but one in three,
God, who girt her with the sea,
Bade our Commonweal to be:
Nought, if now not one.
Though fraud and fear would sever
The bond assured for ever,
Their shameful strength shall never
Undo what heaven has done.

II

South and North and West and East
Watch the ravens flock to feast,
Dense as round some death-struck beast,
Black as night is black.
Stand fast as faith together
In stress of treacherous weather
When hounds and wolves break tether
And Treason guides the pack.

III

Lovelier than thy seas are strong,
Glorious Ireland, sword and song
Gird and crown thee: none may wrong,
Save thy sons alone.
The sea that laughs around us
Hath sundered not but bound us:
The sun's first rising found us
Throned on its equal throne.

IV

North and South and East and West,
All true hearts that wish thee best
Beat one tune and own one quest,
Staunch and sure as steel.
God guard from dark disunion
Our threefold State's communion,
God save the loyal Union,
The royal Commonweal!

EAST TO WEST

Sunset smiles on sunrise: east and west are one,
Face to face in heaven before the sovereign sun.
From the springs of the dawn everlasting a glory
renews and transfigures the west,
From the depths of the sunset a light as of morning
enkindles the broad sea's breast,
And the lands and the skies and the waters are glad
of the day's and the night's work done.

Child of dawn, and regent on the world-wide sea,
England smiles on Europe, fair as dawn and free.
Not the waters that gird her are purer, nor mightier
the winds that her waters know.
But America, daughter and sister of England, is
praised of them, far as they flow:
Atlantic responds to Pacific the praise of her days
that have been and shall be.

So from England westward let the watchword fly,
So for England eastward let the seas reply;
Praise, honour, and love everlasting be sent on the
wind's wings, westward and east,
That the pride of the past and the pride of the
future may mingle as friends at feast,
And the sons of the lords of the world-wide seas be
one till the world's life die.

INSCRIPTIONS

FOR THE FOUR SIDES OF A PEDESTAL

I

MARLOWE, the father of the sons of song
Whose praise is England's crowning praise, above
All glories else that crown her, sweet and strong
As England, clothed with light and fire of love,
And girt with might of passion, thought, and trust,
Stands here in spirit, sleeps not here in dust.

II

Marlowe, a star too sovereign, too superb,
To fade when heaven took fire from Shakespeare's light,
A soul that knew but song's triumphal curb
And love's triumphant bondage, holds of right
His pride of place, who first in place and time
Made England's voice as England's heart sublime.

III

Marlowe bade England live in living song:
The light he lifted up lit Shakespeare's way:
He spake, and life sprang forth in music, strong
As fire or lightning, sweet as dawn of day.
Song was a dream where day took night to wife:
"Let there be life," he said: and there was life.

IV

Marlowe of all our fathers first beheld
  Beyond the tidal ebb and flow of things
The tideless depth and height of souls, impelled
  By thought or passion, borne on waves or wings,
Beyond all flight or sight but song's: and he
First gave our song a sound that matched our sea.

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD BURTON

Night or light is it now, wherein
Sleeps, shut out from the wild world's din,
    Wakes, alive with a life more clear,
One who found not on earth his kin?

Sleep were sweet for a while, were dear
Surely to souls that were heartless here,
    Souls that faltered and flagged and fell,
Soft of spirit and faint of cheer.

A living soul that had strength to quell
Hope the spectre and fear the spell,
    Clear-eyed, content with a scorn sublime
And a faith superb, can it fare not well?

Life, the shadow of wide-winged time,
Cast from the wings that change as they climb,
    Life may vanish in death, and seem
Less than the promise of last year's prime.

But not for us is the past a dream
Wherefrom, as light from a clouded stream,
    Faith fades and shivers and ebbs away,
Faint as the moon if the sundawn gleam.

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD BURTON

Faith, whose eyes in the low last ray
Watch the fire that renews the day,
    Faith which lives in the living past,
Rock-rooted, swerves not as weeds that sway.

As trees that stand in the storm-wind fast
She stands, unsmitten of death's keen blast,
    With strong remembrance of sunbright spring
Alive at heart to the lifeless last.

Night, she knows, may in no wise cling
To a soul that sinks not and droops not wing,
    A sun that sets not in death's false night
Whose kingdom finds him not thrall but king.

Souls there are that for soul's affright
Bow down and cower in the sun's glad sight,
    Clothed round with faith that is one with fear,
And dark with doubt of the live world's light.

But him we hailed from afar or near
As boldest born of the bravest here
    And loved as brightest of souls that eyed
Life, time, and death with unchangeful cheer.

A wider soul than the world was wide,
Whose praise made love of him one with pride,
    What part has death or has time in him,
Who rode life's lists as a god might ride?

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD BURTON

While England sees not her old praise dim,
While still her stars through the world's night swim,
    A fame outshining her Raleigh's fame,
A light that lightens her loud sea's rim,

Shall shine and sound as her sons proclaim
The pride that kindles at Burton's name.
    And joy shall exalt their pride to be
The same in birth if in soul the same.

But we that yearn for a friend's face—we
Who lack the light that on earth was he—
    Mourn, though the light be a quenchless flame
That shines as dawn on a tideless sea.

ELEGY

1869–1891

Auvergne, Auvergne, O wild and woful land,
O glorious land and gracious, white as gleam
The stairs of heaven, black as a flameless brand,
Strange even as life, and stranger than a dream,

Could earth remember man, whose eyes made bright
The splendour of her beauty, lit by day
Or soothed and softened and redeemed by night,
Wouldst thou not know what light has passed away?

Wouldst thou not know whom England, whom the world,
Mourns? For the world whose wildest ways he trod,
And smiled their dangers down that coiled and curled
Against him, knows him now less man than god.

Our demigod of daring, keenest-eyed
To read and deepest read in earth's dim things,
A spirit now whose body of death has died
And left it mightier yet in eyes and wings,

ELEGY

The sovereign seeker of the world, who now
  Hath sought what world the light of death may
    show,
Hailed once with me the crowns that load thy brow,
  Crags dark as midnight, columns bright as snow.

Thy steep small Siena, splendid and content
  As shines the mightier city's Tuscan pride
Which here its face reflects in radiance, pent
  By narrower bounds from towering side to side,

Set fast between the ridged and foamless waves
  Of earth more fierce and fluctuant than the sea,
The fearless town of towers that hails and braves
  The heights that gird, the sun that brands Le Puy;

The huddled churches clinging on the cliffs
  As birds alighting might for storm's sake cling,
Moored to the rocks as tempest-harried skiffs
  To perilous refuge from the loud wind's wing;

The stairs on stairs that wind and change and climb
  Even up to the utmost crag's edge curved and
    curled,
More bright than vision, more than faith sublime,
  Strange as the light and darkness of the world;

Strange as are night and morning, stars and sun,
  And washed from west and east by day's deep
    tide,
Shine yet less fair, when all their heights are won,
  Than sundawn shows thy pillared mountain-side.

Even so the dawn of death, whose light makes dim
The starry fires that life sees rise and set,
Shows higher than here he shone before us him
Whom faith forgets not, nor shall fame forget.

Even so those else unfooted heights we clomb
Through scudding mist and eddying whirls of cloud,
Blind as a pilot beaten blind with foam,
And shrouded as a corpse with storm's grey shroud,

Foot following foot along the sheer strait ledge
Where space was none to bear the wild goat's feet
Till blind we sat on the outer footless edge
Where darkling death seemed fain to share the seat,

The abyss before us, viewless even as time's,
The abyss to left of us, the abyss to right,
Bid thought now dream how high the freed soul climbs
That death sets free from change of day and night.

The might of raging mist and wind whose wrath
Shut from our eyes the narrowing rock we trod,
The wondrous world it darkened, made our path
Like theirs who take the shadow of death for God.

Yet eastward, veiled in vapour white as snow,
The grim black herbless heights that scorn the sun
And mock the face of morning rose to show
The work of earth-born fire and earthquake done.

And half the world was haggard night, wherein
We strove our blind way through: but far above
Was light that watched the wild mists whirl and spin,
And far beneath a land worth light and love.

Deep down the Valley of the Curse, undaunted
By shadow and whisper of winds with sins for wings
And ghosts of crime wherethrough the heights live haunted
By present sense of past and monstrous things,

The glimmering water holds its gracious way
Full forth, and keeps one happier hand's-breadth green
Of all that storm-scathed world whereon the sway
Sits dark as death of deadlier things unseen.

But on the soundless and the viewless river
That bears through night perchance again to day
The dead whom death and twin-born fame deliver
From life that dies, and time's inveterate sway,

No shadow save of falsehood and of fear
That brands the future with the past, and bids
The spirit wither and the soul grow sere,
Hovers or hangs to cloud life's opening lids,

If life have eyes to lift again and see,
Beyond the bounds of sensual sight or breath,
What life incognisable of ours may be
That turns our light to darkness deep as death.

ELEGY

Priests and the soulless serfs of priests may swarm
With vulturous acclamation, loud in lies,
About his dust while yet his dust is warm
Who mocked as sunlight mocks their base blind eyes,

Their godless ghost of godhead, false and foul
As fear his dam or hell his throne: but we,
Scarce hearing, heed no carrion church-wolf's howl:
The corpse be theirs to mock; the soul is free.

Free as ere yet its earthly day was done
It lived above the coil about us curled:
A soul whose eyes were keener than the sun,
A soul whose wings were wider than the world.

We, sons of east and west, ringed round with dreams,
Bound fast with visions, girt about with fears,
Live, trust, and think by chance, while shadow seems
Light, and the wind that wrecks a hand that steers.

He, whose full soul held east and west in poise,
Weighed man with man, and creed of man's with creed,
And age with age, their triumphs and their toys,
And found what faith may read not and may read.

Scorn deep and strong as death and life, that lit
With fire the smile at lies and dreams outworn
Wherewith he smote them, showed sublime in it
The splendour and the steadfastness of scorn.

ELEGY

What loftier heaven, what lordlier air, what space
  Illimitable, insuperable, infinite,
Now to that strong-winged soul yields ampler place
  Than passing darkness yields to passing light,

No dream, no faith can tell us: hope and fear,
  Whose tongues were loud of old as children's, now
From babbling fall to silence: change is here,
  And death; dark furrows drawn by time's dark
    plough.

Still sunward here on earth its flight was bent,
  Even since the man within the child began
To yearn and kindle with superb intent
  And trust in time to magnify the man.

Still toward the old garden of the Sun, whose fruit
  The honey-heavy lips of Sophocles
Desired and sang, wherein the unwithering root
  Sprang of all growths that thought brings forth
    and sees

Incarnate, bright with bloom or dense with leaf
  Far-shadowing, deep as depth of dawn or night:
And all were parcel of the garnered sheaf
  His strenuous spirit bound and stored aright.

And eastward now, and ever toward the dawn,
  If death's deep veil by life's bright hand be
    rent,
We see, as through the shadow of death withdrawn,
  The imperious soul's indomitable ascent.

But not the soul whose labour knew not end—
  But not the swordsman's hand, the crested head—
The royal heart we mourn, the faultless friend,
  Burton—a name that lives till fame be dead.

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

I

The clearest eyes in all the world they read
With sense more keen and spirit of sight more true
Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew
Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,
As they the light of ages quick and dead,
Closed now, forsake us: yet the shaft that slew
Can slay not one of all the works we knew,
Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.

The works of words whose life seems lightning wrought,
And moulded of unconquerable thought,
And quickened with imperishable flame,
Stand fast and shine and smile, assured that nought
May fade of all their myriad-moulded fame,
Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's name.

December 13, 1889.

II

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom
Time is not lord, but servant? What least part
Of all the fire that fed his living heart,
Of all the light more keen than sundawn's bloom
That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom
And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart
Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what
thou art,
A shadow born of terror's barren womb,
That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,
To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,
That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath
Can make him less than love acclaims him now,
And hears all time sound back the word it saith?
What part hast thou then in his glory, Death?

III

A graceless doom it seems that bids us grieve:
Venice and winter, hand in deadly hand,
Have slain the lover of her sunbright strand
And singer of a stormbright Christmas Eve.
A graceless guerdon we that loved receive
For all our love, from that the dearest land
Love worshipped ever. Blithe and soft and bland,
Too fair for storm to scathe or fire to cleave,
Shone on our dreams and memories evermore
The domes, the towers, the mountains and the shore
That gird or guard thee, Venice: cold and black
Seems now the face we loved as he of yore.

We have given thee love—no stint, no stay, no lack:
What gift, what gift is this thou hast given us back?

IV

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,
Death? Hardly may we think or hope, when we
Pass likewise thither where to-night is he,
Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine
And darken round such dreams as half divine
Some sunlit harbour in that starless sea
Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,
To read with him the secret of thy shrine.

There too, as here, may song, delight, and love,
The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,
Fulfil with joy the splendour of the sky
Till all beneath wax bright as all above:
But none of all that search the heavens, and try
The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

December 14.

V

Among the wondrous ways of men and time
He went as one that ever found and sought
And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought
To illumine with instance of its fire sublime
The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.
No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,

No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
No love more lovely than the snows are white,
No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
But he might hear, interpret, or illume
With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

VI

What secret thing of splendour or of shade
Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein
Man, led of love and life and death and sin,
Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,
Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade
Of that full soul that had for aim to win
Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,
Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade?
O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee
That he might know not of in spirit, and see
The heart within the heart that seems to strive,
The life within the life that seems to be,
And hear, through all thy storms that whirl and drive,
The living sound of all men's souls alive?

VII

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.
But never death for him was dark or dread:

"Look forth" he bade the soul, and fear not.
Weep,
All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
As all that lives of all that once was he
Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,
Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
And life and death but shadows of the soul.

December 15.

SUNSET AND MOONRISE

New Year's Eve, 1889

All the west, whereon the sunset sealed the dead year's glorious grave
Fast with seals of light and fire and cloud that light and fire illumine,
Glows at heart and kindles earth and heaven with joyous blush and bloom,
Warm and wide as life, and glad of death that only slays to save.
As a tide-reconquered sea-rock lies aflush with the influent wave
Lies the light aflush with darkness, lapped about by lustrous gloom,
Even as life with death, and fame with time, and memory with the tomb
Where a dead man hath for vassals Fame the serf and Time the slave.

Far from earth as heaven, the steadfast light withdrawn, superb, suspense,
Burns in dumb divine expansion of illimitable flower:

SUNSET AND MOONRISE

Moonrise whets the shadow's edges keen as noon-
tide: hence and thence
Glows the presence from us passing, shines and
passes not the power.
Souls arise whose word remembered is as spirit
within the sense:
All the hours are theirs of all the seasons: death
has but his hour.

BIRTHDAY ODE

August 6, 1891

I

Love and praise, and a length of days whose
shadow cast upon time is light,
Days whose sound was a spell shed round from
wheeling wings as of doves in flight,
Meet in one, that the mounting sun to-day may
triumph, and cast out night.

Two years more than the full fourscore lay hallowing
hands on a sacred head—
Scarce one score of the perfect four uncrowned of
fame as they smiled and fled:
Still and soft and alive aloft their sunlight stays
though the suns be dead.

Ere we were or were thought on, ere the love that
gave us to life began,
Fame grew strong with his crescent song, to greet
the goal of the race they ran,
Song with fame, and the lustrous name with years
whose changes acclaimed the man.

II

Soon, ere time in the rounding rhyme of choral
seasons had hailed us men,
We too heard and acclaimed the word whose breath
was life upon England then—
Life more bright than the breathless light of sound-
less noon in a songless glen.

Ah, the joy of the heartstruck boy whose ear was
opened of love to hear!
Ah, the bliss of the burning kiss of song and spirit,
the mounting cheer
Lit with fire of divine desire and love that knew not
if love were fear!

Fear and love as of heaven above and earth en-
kindled of heaven were one;
One white flame, that around his name grew keen
and strong as the worldwide sun;
Awe made bright with implied delight, as weft with
weft of the rainbow spun.

III

He that fears not the voice he hears and loves shall
never have heart to sing:
All the grace of the sun-god's face that bids the soul
as a fountain spring
Bids the brow that receives it bow, and hail his like-
ness on earth as king.

BIRTHDAY ODE

We that knew when the sun's shaft flew beheld and
worshipped, adored and heard:
Light rang round it of shining sound, whence all
men's hearts were subdued and stirred:
Joy, love, sorrow, the day, the morrow, took life
upon them in one man's word.

Not for him can the years wax dim, nor downward
swerve on a darkening way:
Upward wind they, and leave behind such light as
lightens the front of May:
Fair as youth and sublime as truth we find the fame
that we hail to-day.

THRENODY

October 6, 1892

I

Life, sublime and serene when time had power upon
it and ruled its breath,
Changed it, bade it be glad or sad, and hear what
change in the world's ear saith,
Shines more fair in the starrier air whose glory
lightens the dusk of death.

Suns that sink on the wan sea's brink, and moons
that kindle and flame and fade,
Leave more clear for the darkness here the stars that
set not and see not shade
Rise and rise on the lowlier skies by rule of sunlight
and moonlight swayed.

So, when night for his eyes grew bright, his proud
head pillowed on Shakespeare's breast,
Hand in hand with him, soon to stand where shine
the glories that death loves best,
Passed the light of his face from sight, and sank
sublimely to radiant rest.

II

Far above us and all our love, beyond all reach of
its voiceless praise,
Shines for ever the name that never shall feel the
shade of the changeful days
Fall and chill the delight that still sees winter's light
on it shine like May's.

Strong as death is the dark day's breath whose blast
has withered the life we see
Here where light is the child of night, and less than
visions or dreams are we:
Strong as death; but a word, a breath, a dream is
stronger than death can be.

Strong as truth and superb in youth eternal, fair as
the sundawn's flame
Seen when May on her first-born day bids earth
exult in her radiant name,
Lives, clothed round with its praise and crowned
with love that dies not, his love-lit fame.

III

Fairer far than the morning star, and sweet for us as
the songs that rang
Loud through heaven from the choral Seven when all
the stars of the morning sang,
Shines the song that we loved so long—since first
such love in us flamed and sprang.

THRENODY

England glows as a sunlit rose from mead to mountain, from sea to sea,
Bright with love and with pride above all taint of sorrow that needs must be,
Needs must live for an hour, and give its rainbow's glory to lawn and lea.

Not through tears shall the new-born years behold him, crowned with applause of men,
Pass at last from a lustrous past to life that lightens beyond their ken,
Glad and dead, and from earthward led to sunward, guided of Imogen.

THE BALLAD OF MELICERTES

In Memory of Théodore de Banville

Death, a light outshining life, bids heaven resume
  Star by star the souls whose light made earth divine.
Death, a night outshining day, sees burn and bloom
  Flower by flower, and sun by sun, the fames that shine
  Deathless, higher than life beheld their sovereign sign.
Dead Simonides of Ceos, late restored,
Given again of God, again by man deplored,
  Shone but yestereve, a glory frail as breath.
Frail? But fame's breath quickens, kindles, keeps in ward,
  Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Mother's love and rapture of the sea, whose womb
  Breeds eternal life of joy that stings like brine,
Pride of song, and joy to dare the singer's doom,
  Sorrow soft as sleep and laughter bright as wine,
  Flushed and filled with fragrant fire his lyric line.

As the sea-shell utters, like a stricken chord,
Music uttering all the sea's within it stored,
Poet well-beloved, whose praise our sorrow saith
So thy songs retain thy soul, and so record
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Side by side we mourned at Gautier's golden tomb:
Here in spirit now I stand and mourn at thine.
Yet no breath of death strikes thence, no shadow of gloom,
Only light more bright than gold of the inmost mine,
Only steam of incense warm from love's own shrine.
Not the darkling stream, the sundering Stygian ford,
Not the hour that smites and severs as a sword,
Not the night subduing light that perisheth,
Smite, subdue, divide from us by doom abhorred,
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Prince of song more sweet than honey, lyric lord,
Not thy France here only mourns a light adored,
One whose love-lit fame the world inheriteth.
Strangers too, now brethren, hail with heart's accord
Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

AU TOMBEAU DE BANVILLE

La plus douce des voix qui vibraient sous le ciel
Se tait: les rossignols ailés pleurent le frère
Qui s'envole au-dessus de l'âpre et sombre terre,
Ne lui laissant plus voir que l'être essentiel,

Esprit qui chante et rit, fleur d'une âme sans fiel.
L'ombre élyséenne, où la nuit n'est que lumière,
Revoit, tout revêtu de splendeur douce et fière,
Mélicerte, poète à la bouche de miel.

Dieux exilés, passants célestes de ce monde,
Dont on entend parfois dans notre nuit profonde
Vibrer la voix, frémir les ailes, vous savez
S'il vous aima, s'il vous pleura, lui dont la vie
Et le chant rappelaient les vôtres. Recevez
L'âme de Mélicerte affranchie et ravie.

LIGHT: AN EPICEDE

To Philip Bourke Marston

Love will not weep because the seal is broken
That sealed upon a life beloved and brief
Darkness, and let but song break through for token
How deep, too far for even thy song's relief,
Slept in thy soul the secret springs of grief.

Thy song may soothe full many a soul hereafter,
As tears, if tears will come, dissolve despair;
As here but late, with smile more bright than laughter,
Thy sweet strange yearning eyes would seem to bear
Witness that joy might cleave the clouds of care.

Two days agone, and love was one with pity
When love gave thought wings toward the glimmering goal
Where, as a shrine lit in some darkling city,
Shone soft the shrouded image of thy soul:
And now thou art healed of life; thou art healed, and whole.

Yea, two days since, all we that loved thee pitied:
And now with wondering love, with shame of face,
We think how foolish now, how far unfitted,
Should be from us, toward thee who hast run thy race,
Pity—toward thee, who hast won the painless place;

The painless world of death, yet unbeholden
Of eyes that dream what light now lightens thine
And will not weep. Thought, yearning toward those olden
Dear hours that sorrow sees and sees not shine,
Bows tearless down before a flameless shrine:

A flameless altar here of life and sorrow
Quenched and consumed together. These were one,
One thing for thee, as night was one with morrow
And utter darkness with the sovereign sun:
And now thou seest life, sorrow, and darkness done.

And yet love yearns again to win thee hither;
Blind love, and loveless, and unworthy thee:
Here where I watch the hours of darkness wither,
Here where mine eyes were glad and sad to see
Thine that could see not mine, though turned on me.

But now, if aught beyond sweet sleep lie hidden,
And sleep be sealed not fast on dead men's sight
For ever, thine hath grace for ours forbidden,
And sees us compassed round with change and night:
Yet light like thine is ours, if love be light.

THRENODY

Watching here alone by the fire whereat last year
Sat with me the friend that a week since yet was near,
That a week has borne so far and hid so deep,
Woe am I that I may not weep,
May not yearn to behold him here.

Shame were mine, and little the love I bore him were,
Now to mourn that better he fares than love may fare
Which desires, and would not have indeed, its will,
Would not love him so worse than ill,
Would not clothe him again with care.

Yet can love not choose but remember, hearts but ache,
Eyes but darken, only for one vain thought's poor sake,
For the thought that by this hearth's now lonely side
Two fast friends, on the day he died,
Looked once more for his hand to take.

Let thy soul forgive them, and pardon heal the sin,
Though their hearts be heavy to think what then had been,
The delight that never while they live may be—
Love's communion of speech with thee,
Soul and speech with the soul therein.

O my friend, O brother, a glory veiled and marred!
Never love made moan for a life more evil-starred.
Was it envy, chance, or chance-compelling fate,
Whence thy spirit was bruised so late,
Bowed so heavily, bound so hard?

Now released, it may be, — if only love might know—
Filled and fired with sight, it beholds us blind and low
With a pity keener yet, if that may be,
Even than ever was this that we
Felt, when love of thee wrought us woe.

None may tell the depths and the heights of life and death.
What we may we give thee: a word that sorrow saith,
And that none will heed save sorrow: scarce a song.
All we may, who have loved thee long,
Take: the best we can give is breath.

A DIRGE

A BELL tolls on in my heart
  As though in my ears a knell
  Had ceased for a while to swell,
But the sense of it would not part
From the spirit that bears its part
  In the chime of the soundless bell.

Ah dear dead singer of sorrow,
  The burden is now not thine
  That grief bade sound for a sign
Through the songs of the night whose morrow
Has risen, and I may not borrow
  A beam from its radiant shrine.

The burden has dropped from thee
  That grief on thy life bound fast;
  The winter is over and past
Whose end thou wast fain to see.
Shall sorrow not comfort me
  That is thine no longer—at last?

A DIRGE

Good day, good night, and good morrow,
  Men living and mourning say.
  For thee we could only pray
That night of the day might borrow
Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow:
  Death gives thee at last good day.

A REMINISCENCE

The rose to the wind has yielded: all its leaves
Lie strewn on the graveyard grass, and all their light
And colour and fragrance leave our sense and sight
Bereft as a man whom bitter time bereaves
Of blossom at once and hope of garnered sheaves,
Of April at once and August. Day to night
Calls wailing, and life to death, and depth to height,
And soul upon soul of man that hears and grieves.

Who knows, though he see the snow-cold blossom shed,
If haply the heart that burned within the rose,
The spirit in sense, the life of life be dead?
If haply the wind that slays with storming snows
Be one with the wind that quickens? Bow thine head,
O Sorrow, and commune with thine heart: who knows?

VIA DOLOROSA

The days of a man are threescore years and ten.
The days of his life were half a man's, whom we
Lament, and would yet not bid him back, to be
Partaker of all the woes and ways of men.
Life sent him enough of sorrow: not again
Would anguish of love, beholding him set free,
Bring back the beloved to suffer life and see
No light but the fire of grief that scathed him then.

We know not at all: we hope, and do not fear.
We shall not again behold him, late so near,
Who now from afar above, with eyes alight
And spirit enkindled, haply toward us here
Looks down unforgetful yet of days like night
And love that has yet his sightless face in sight.

February 15, 1887.

I

TRANSFIGURATION

But half a man's days—and his days were nights.
What hearts were ours who loved him, should we pray,
That night would yield him back to darkling day,
Sweet death that soothes, to life that spoils and smites?
For now, perchance, life lovelier than the light's
That shed no comfort on his weary way
Shows him what none may dream to see or say
Ere yet the soul may scale those topless heights
Where death lies dead, and triumph. Haply there
Already may his kindling eyesight find
Faces of friends—no face than his more fair—
And first among them found of all his kind
Milton, with crowns from Eden on his hair,
And eyes that meet a brother's now not blind.

II

DELIVERANCE

O Death, fair Death, sole comforter and sweet,
  Nor Love nor Hope can give such gifts as thine.
  Sleep hardly shows us round thy shadowy shrine
What roses hang, what music floats, what feet
Pass and what wings of angels. We repeat
  Wild words or mild, disastrous or divine,
  Blind prayer, blind imprecation, seeing no sign
Nor hearing aught of thee not faint and fleet
As words of men or snowflakes on the wind.
But if we chide thee, saying "Thou hast sinned,
      thou hast sinned,
Dark Death, to take so sweet a light away
  As shone but late, though shadowed, in our skies,"
We hear thine answer—"Night has given what day
  Denied him: darkness hath unsealed his eyes."

III

THANKSGIVING

Could love give strength to thank thee! Love can give
Strong sorrow heart to suffer: what we bear
We would not put away, albeit this were
A burden love might cast aside and live.
Love chooses rather pain than palliative,
Sharp thought than soft oblivion. May we dare
So trample down our passion and our prayer
That fain would cling round feet now fugitive
And stay them—so remember, so forget,
What joy we had who had his presence yet,
What griefs were his while joy in him was ours
And grief made weary music of his breath,
As even to hail his best and last of hours
With love grown strong enough to thank thee, Death?

IV

LIBITINA VERTICORDIA

Sister of sleep, healer of life, divine
As rest and strong as very love may be,
To set the soul that love could set not free,
To bid the skies that day could bid not shine,
To give the gift that life withheld was thine.
With all my heart I loved one borne from me:
And all my heart bows down and praises thee,
Death, that hast now made grief not his but mine.

O Changer of men's hearts, we would not bid thee
Turn back our hearts from sorrow: this alone
We bid, we pray thee, from thy sovereign throne
And sanctuary sublime where heaven has hid thee,
Give: grace to know of those for whom we weep
That if they wake their life is sweet as sleep.

V

THE ORDER OF RELEASE

Thou canst not give it. Grace enough is ours
To know that pain for him has fallen on rest.
The worst we know was his on earth: the best,
We fain would think,—a thought no fear deflowers—
Is his, released from bonds of rayless hours.
Ah, turn our hearts from longing; bid our quest
Cease, as content with failure. This thy guest
Sleeps, vexed no more of time's imperious powers,
The spirit of hope, the spirit of change and loss,
The spirit of love bowed down beneath his cross,
Nor now needs comfort from the strength of song.
Love, should he wake, bears now no cross for him:
Dead hope, whose living eyes like his were dim,
Has brought forth better comfort, strength more
strong.

VI

PSYCHAGOGOS

As Greece of old acclaimed thee God and man,
So, Death, our tongue acclaims thee: yet wast thou
Hailed of old Rome as Romans hail thee now,
Goddess and woman. Since the sands first ran
That told when first man's life and death began,
The shadows round thy blind ambiguous brow
Have mocked the votive plea, the pleading vow
That sought thee sorrowing, fain to bless or ban.

But stronger than a father's love is thine,
And gentler than a mother's. Lord and God,
Thy staff is surer than the wizard rod
That Hermes bare as priest before thy shrine
And herald of thy mercies. We could give
Nought, when we would have given: thou bidst
him live.

VII

THE LAST WORD

So many a dream and hope that went and came,
  So many and sweet, that love thought like to be,
  Of hours as bright and soft as those for me
That made our hearts for song's sweet love the same,
Lie now struck dead, that hope seems one with shame.
  O Death, thy name is Love: we know it, and see
  The witness: yet for very love's sake we
Can hardly bear to mix with thine his name.

Philip, how hard it is to bid thee part
Thou knowest, if aught thou knowest where now thou art
  Of us that loved and love thee. None may tell
What none but knows—how hard it is to say
The word that seals up sorrow, darkens day,
  And bids fare forth the soul it bids farewell.

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

The wider world of men that is not ours
Receives a soul whose life on earth was light,
Though darkness close the date of human hours,
Love holds the spirit and sense of life in sight,
That may not, even though death bid fly, take flight.
Faith, love, and hope fulfilled with memory, see
As clear and dear as life could bid it be
The present soul that is and is not he.

He, who held up the shield and sword of Rome
Against the ravening brood of recreant France,
Beside the man of men whom heaven took home
When earth beheld the spring's first eyebeams glance
And life and winter seemed alike a trance
Eighteen years since, in sight of heaven and spring
That saw the soul above all souls take wing,
He too now hears the heaven we hear not sing.

He too now dwells where death is dead, and stands
Where souls like stars exult in life to be:
Whence all who linked heroic hearts and hands
Shine on our sight, and give it strength to see
What hope makes fair for all whom faith makes free:

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

Free with such freedom as we find in sleep,
The light sweet shadow of death, when dreams are deep
And high as heaven whence light and lightning leap.

And scarce a month yet gone, his living hand
Writ loving words that sealed me friend of his.
Are heaven and earth as near as sea to strand?
May life and death as bride and bridegroom kiss?
His last month's written word abides, and is;
Clear as the sun that lit through storm and strife
And darkling days when hope took fear to wife
The faith whose fire was light of all his life.

A life so fair, so pure of earthlier leaven,
That none hath won through higher and harder ways
The deathless life of death which earth calls heaven;
Heaven, and the light of love on earth, and praise
Of silent memory through subsiding days
Wherein the light subsides not whence the past
Feeds full with life the future. Time holds fast
Their names whom faith forgets not, first and last.

Forget? The dark forgets not dawn, nor we
The suns that sink to rise again, and shine
Lords of live years and ages. Earth and sea
Forget not heaven that makes them seem divine,
Though night put out their fires and bid their shrine
Be dark and pale as storm and twilight. Day,
Not night, is everlasting: life's full sway
Bids death bow down as dead, and pass away.

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

What part has death in souls that past all fear
Win heavenward their supernal way, and smite
With scorn sublime as heaven such dreams as here
Plague and perplex with cloud and fire the light
That leads men's waking souls from glimmering night
To the awless heights of day, whereon man's awe,
Transfigured, dies in rapture, seeing the law
Sealed of the sun that earth arising saw?

Faith, justice, mercy, love, and heaven-born hate
That sets them all on fire and bids them be
More than soft words and dreams that wake too late,
Shone living through the lordly life that we
Beheld, revered, and loved on earth, while he
Dwelt here, and bade our eyes take light thereof;
Light as from heaven that flamed or smiled above
In light or fire whose very hate was love.

No hate of man, but hate of hate whose foam
Sheds poison forth from tongues of snakes and priests,
And stains the sickening air with steams whence Rome
Now feeds not full the God that slays and feasts;
For now the fangs of all the ravenous beasts
That ramped about him, fain of prayer and prey,
Fulfil their lust no more: the tide of day
Swells, and compels him down the deathward way.

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

Night sucks the Church its creature down, and hell
  Yawns, heaves, and yearns to clasp its loathliest
    child
Close to the breasts that bore it. All the spell
  Whence darkness saw the dawn in heaven defiled
  Is dumb as death: the lips that lied and smiled
Wax white for fear as ashes. She that bore
The banner up of darkness now no more
Sheds night and fear and shame from shore to shore.

When they that cast her kingdom down were born,
  North cried on south and east made moan to west
For hopes that love had hardly heart to mourn,
  For Italy that was not. Kings on quest,
  By priests whose blessings burn as curses blest,
Made spoil of souls and bodies bowed and bound,
Hunted and harried, leashed as horse or hound,
And hopeless of the hope that died unfound.

And now that faith has brought forth fruit to time,
  How should not memory praise their names, and
    hold
Their record even as Dante's life sublime,
  Who bade his dream, found fair and false of old,
  Live? Not till earth and heaven be dead and cold
May man forget whose work and will made one
Italy, fair as heaven or freedom won,
And left their fame to shine beside her sun.

April 1890

THE FESTIVAL OF BEATRICE

Dante, sole standing on the heavenward height,
Beheld and heard one saying, "Behold me well:
I am, I am Beatrice." Heaven and hell
Kept silence, and the illimitable light
Of all the stars was darkness in his sight
Whose eyes beheld her eyes again, and fell
Shame-stricken. Since her soul took flight to dwell
In heaven, six hundred years have taken flight.

And now that heavenliest part of earth whereon
Shines yet their shadow as once their presence shone
To her bears witness for his sake, as he
For hers bare witness when her face was gone:
No slave, no hospice now for grief—but free
From shore to mountain and from Alp to sea.

THE MONUMENT OF GIORDANO BRUNO

I

Not from without us, only from within,
Comes or can ever come upon us light
Whereby the soul keeps ever truth in sight.
No truth, no strength, no comfort man may win,
No grace for guidance, no release from sin,
Save of his own soul's giving. Deep and bright
As fire enkindled in the core of night
Burns in the soul where once its fire has been
The light that leads and quickens thought, inspired
To doubt and trust and conquer. So he said
Whom Sidney, flower of England, lordliest head
Of all we love, loved: but the fates required
A sacrifice to hate and hell, ere fame
Should set with his in heaven Giordano's name.

II

Cover thine eyes and weep, O child of hell,
Grey spouse of Satan, Church of name abhorred.
Weep, withered harlot, with thy weeping lord,
Now none will buy the heaven thou hast to sell
At price of prostituted souls, and swell

Thy loveless list of lovers. Fire and sword
No more are thine: the steel, the wheel, the cord,
The flames that rose round living limbs, and fell
In lifeless ash and ember, now no more
Approve thee godlike. Rome, redeemed at last
From all the red pollution of thy past,
Acclaims the grave bright face that smiled of yore
Even on the fire that caught it round and clomb
To cast its ashes on the face of Rome.

June 9, 1889

LIFE IN DEATH

He should have followed who goes forth before us,
Last born of us in life, in death first-born:
The last to lift up eyes against the morn,
The first to see the sunset. Life, that bore us
Perchance for death to comfort and restore us,
Of him hath left us here awhile forlorn,
For him is as a garment overworn,
And time and change, with suns and stars in chorus,
Silent. But if, beyond all change or time,
A law more just, more equal, more sublime
Than sways the surge of life's loud sterile sea
Sways that still world whose peace environs him,
Where death lies dead as night when stars wax dim,
Above all thought or hope of ours is he.

August 2, 1891.

EPICEDE

As a vesture shalt thou change them, said the prophet,
And the raiment that was flesh is turned to dust;
Dust and flesh and dust again the likeness of it,
And the fine gold woven and worn of youth is rust.
Hours that wax and wane salute the shade and scoff it,
That it knows not aught it doth nor aught it must:
Day by day the speeding soul makes haste to doff it,
Night by night the pride of life resigns its trust.

Sleep, whose silent notes of song loud life's derange not,
Takes the trust in hand awhile as angels may:
Joy with wings that rest not, grief with wings that range not,
Guard the gates of sleep and waking, gold or grey.
Joys that joys estrange, and griefs that griefs estrange not,
Day that yearns for night, and night that yearns for day,
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they change not,
Seeing that change may never change or pass away.

EPICEDE

Life of death makes question, "What art thou that changest?
What am I, that fear should trust or faith should doubt?
I that lighten, thou that darkenest and estrangest,
Is it night or day that girds us round about?
Light and darkness on the ways wherein thou rangest
Seem as one, and beams as clouds they put to rout.
Strange is hope, but fear of all things born were strangest,
Seeing that none may strive with change to cast it out.

"Change alone stands fast, thou sayest, O death: I know not:
What art thou, my brother death, that thou shouldst know?
Men may reap no fruits of fields wherein they sow not;
Hope or fear is all the seed we have to sow.
Winter seals the sacred springs up that they flow not:
Wind and sun and change unbind them, and they flow.
Am I thou or art thou I? The years that show not
Pass, and leave no sign when time shall be to show."

Hope makes suit to faith lest fear give ear to sorrow:
Doubt strews dust upon his head, and goes his way.
All the golden hope that life of death would borrow,
How, if death require again, may life repay?

EPICEDE

Earth endures no darkness whence no light yearns
thorough;
God in man as light in darkness lives, they say:
Yet, would midnight take assurance of the morrow,
Who shall pledge the faith or seal the bond of
day?

Darkness, mute or loud with music or with mourning,
Starry darkness, winged with wind or clothed with
calm,
Dreams no dream of grief or fear or wrath or warning,
Bears no sign of race or goal or strife or palm.
Word of blessing, word of mocking or of scorning,
Knows it none, nor whence its breath sheds blight
or balm.
Yet a little while, and hark, the psalm of morning:
Yet a little while, and silence takes the psalm.

All the comfort, all the worship, all the wonder,
All the light of love that darkness holds in fee,
All the song that silence keeps or keeps not under,
Night, the soul that knows gives thanks for all to
thee.
Far beyond the gates that morning strikes in sunder,
Hopes that grief makes holy, dreams that fear sets
free,
Far above the throne of thought, the lair of thunder,
Silent shines the word whose utterance fills the sea.

MEMORIAL VERSES ON THE DEATH OF WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

A LIFE more bright than the sun's face, bowed
Through stress of season and coil of cloud,
Sets: and the sorrow that casts out fear
Scarce deems him dead in his chill still shroud,

Dead on the breast of the dying year,
Poet and painter and friend, thrice dear
For love of the suns long set, for love
Of song that sets not with sunset here,

For love of the fervent heart, above
Their sense who saw not the swift light move
That filled with sense of the loud sun's lyre
The thoughts that passion was fain to prove

In fervent labour of high desire
And faith that leapt from its own quenched pyre
Alive and strong as the sun, and caught
From darkness light, and from twilight fire.

Passion, deep as the depths unsought
Whence faith's own hope may redeem us nought,
Filled full with ardour of pain sublime
His mourning song and his mounting thought.

Elate with sense of a sterner time,
His hand's flight clomb as a bird's might climb
Calvary: dark in the darkling air
That shrank for fear of the crowning crime,

Three crosses rose on the hillside bare,
Shown scarce by grace of the lightning's glare
That clove the veil of the temple through
And smote the priests on the threshold there.

The soul that saw it, the hand that drew,
Whence light as thought's or as faith's glance flew,
And stung to life the sepulchral past,
And bade the stars of it burn anew,

Held no less than the dead world fast
The light live shadows about them cast,
The likeness living of dawn and night,
The days that pass and the dreams that last.

Thought, clothed round with sorrow as light,
Dark as a cloud that the moon turns bright,
Moved, as a wind on the striving sea,
That yearns and quickens and flags in flight,

Through forms of colour and song that he
Who fain would have set its wide wings free
Cast round it, clothing or chaining hope
With lights that last not and shades that flee.

Scarce in song could his soul find scope,
Scarce the strength of his hand might ope
Art's inmost gate of her sovereign shrine,
To cope with heaven as a man may cope.

But high as the hope of a man may shine
The faith, the fervour, the life divine
That thrills our life and transfigures, rose
And shone resurgent, a sunbright sign,

Through shapes whereunder the strong soul glows
And fills them full as a sunlit rose
With sense and fervour of life, whose light
The fool's eye knows not, the man's eye knows.

None that can read or divine aright
The scriptures writ of the soul may slight
The strife of a strenuous soul to show
More than the craft of the hand may write.

None may slight it, and none may know
How high the flames that aspire and glow
From heart and spirit and soul may climb
And triumph; higher than the souls lie low

Whose hearing hears not the livelong rhyme,
Whose eyesight sees not the light sublime,
That shines, that sounds, that ascends and lives
Unquenched of change, unobscured of time.

MEMORIAL VERSES

A long life's length, as a man's life gives
Space for the spirit that soars and strives
To strive and soar, has the soul shone through
That heeds not whither the world's wind drives

Now that the days and the ways it knew
Are strange, are dead as the dawn's grey dew
At high midnoon of the mounting day
That mocks the might of the dawn it slew.

Yet haply may not—and haply may—
No sense abide of the dead sun's ray
Wherein the soul that outsoars us now
Rejoiced with ours in its radiant sway.

Hope may hover, and doubt may bow,
Dreaming. Haply—they dream not how—
Not life but death may indeed be dead
When silence darkens the dead man's brow.

Hope, whose name is remembrance, fed
With love that lightens from seasons fled,
Dreams, and craves not indeed to know,
That death and life are as souls that wed.

But change that falls on the heart like snow
Can chill not memory nor hope, that show
The soul, the spirit, the heart and head,
Alive above us who strive below.

AN OLD SAYING

Many waters cannot quench love,
  Neither can the floods drown it.
Who shall snare or slay the white dove
  Faith, whose very dreams crown it,
Gird it round with grace and peace, deep,
Warm, and pure, and soft as sweet sleep?
Many waters cannot quench love,
  Neither can the floods drown it.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
  As a seal upon thine arm.
How should we behold the days depart
  And the nights resign their charm?
Love is as the soul: though hate and fear
Waste and overthrow, they strike not here.
Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
  As a seal upon thine arm.

A MOSS-ROSE

If the rose of all flowers be the rarest
  That heaven may adore from above,
And the fervent moss-rose be the fairest
  That sweetens the summer with love,

Can it be that a fairer than any
  Should blossom afar from the tree?
Yet one, and a symbol of many,
  Shone sudden for eyes that could see.

In the grime and the gloom of November
  The bliss and the bloom of July
Bade autumn rejoice and remember
  The balm of the blossoms gone by.

Would you know what moss-rose now it may be
  That puts all the rest to the blush,
The flower was the face of a baby,
  The moss was a bonnet of plush.

TO A CAT

I

Stately, kindly, lordly friend,
Condescend
Here to sit by me, and turn
Glorious eyes that smile and burn,
Golden eyes, love's lustrous meed,
On the golden page I read.

All your wondrous wealth of hair,
Dark and fair,
Silken-shaggy, soft and bright
As the clouds and beams of night,
Pays my reverent hand's caress
Back with friendlier gentleness.

Dogs may fawn on all and some
As they come;
You, a friend of loftier mind,
Answer friends alone in kind.
Just your foot upon my hand
Softly bids it understand.

TO A CAT

Morning round this silent sweet
Garden-seat
Sheds its wealth of gathering light,
Thrills the gradual clouds with might,
Changes woodland, orchard, heath,
Lawn, and garden there beneath.

Fair and dim they gleamed below:
Now they glow
Deep as even your sunbright eyes,
Fair as even the wakening skies.
Can it not or can it be
Now that you give thanks to see?

May not you rejoice as I,
Seeing the sky
Change to heaven revealed, and bid
Earth reveal the heaven it hid
All night long from stars and moon,
Now the sun sets all in tune?

What within you wakes with day
Who can say?
All too little may we tell,
Friends who like each other well,
What might haply, if we might,
Bid us read our lives aright.

II

Wild on woodland ways your sires
Flashed like fires;

TO A CAT

Fair as flame and fierce and fleet
As with wings on wingless feet
Shone and sprang your mother, free,
Bright and brave as wind or sea.

Free and proud and glad as they,
Here to-day
Rests or roams their radiant child,
Vanquished not, but reconciled,
Free from curb of aught above
Save the lovely curb of love.

Love through dreams of souls divine
Fain would shine
Round a dawn whose light and song
Then should right our mutual wrong—
Speak, and seal the love-lit law
Sweet Assisi's seer foresaw.

Dreams were theirs; yet haply may
Dawn a day
When such friends and fellows born,
Seeing our earth as fair at morn,
May for wiser love's sake see
More of heaven's deep heart than we.

HAWTHORN DYKE

All the golden air is full of balm and bloom
Where the hawthorns line the shelving dyke with flowers.
Joyous children born of April's happiest hours,
High and low they laugh and lighten, knowing their doom
Bright as brief—to bless and cheer they know not whom,
Heed not how, but washed and warmed with suns and showers
Smile, and bid the sweet soft gradual banks and bowers
Thrill with love of sunlit fire or starry gloom.
All our moors and lawns all round rejoice; but here
All the rapturous resurrection of the year
Finds the radiant utterance perfect, sees the word
Spoken, hears the light that speaks it. Far and near,
All the world is heaven: and man and flower and bird
Here are one at heart with all things seen and heard.

THE BROTHERS

THERE were twa brethren fell on strife;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
The tane has reft his brother of life;
And the wind wears owre the heather.

There were twa brethren fell to fray;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
The tane is clad in a cloak of clay;
And the wind wears owre the heather.

O loud and loud was the live man's cry,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"Would God the dead and the slain were I!"
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sair was the wrang and sair the fray,"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"But liefer had love be slain than slay."
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sweet is the life that sleeps at hame,"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"But I maun wake on a far sea's faem."
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"And women are fairest of a' things fair."
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"But never shall I kiss woman mair."
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the birk and the aik and the thorn
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
He's laid his brother to lie forlorn:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the bent and the burn and the broom
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
He's laid him to sleep till dawn of doom:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

He's tane him owre the waters wide,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
Afar to fleet and afar to bide:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His hair was yellow, his cheek was red,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
When he set his face to the wind and fled:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were stark and his een were bright
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
When he set his face to the sea by night:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His cheek was wan and his hair was grey
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
When he came back hame frae the wide world's way:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were weary, his een were dim,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
And nae man lived and had mind of him:
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O whatten a wreck wad they seek on land"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"That they houk the turf to the seaward hand?"
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O whatten a prey wad they think to take"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"That they delve the dykes for a dead man's sake?"
And the wind wears owre the heather.

A bane of the dead in his hand he's tane:
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
And the red blood brak frae the dead white bane.
And the wind wears owre the heather.

He's cast it forth of his auld faint hand;
Sweet fruits are sair to gather:
And the red blood ran on the wan wet sand.
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O whatten a slayer is this," they said,
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"That the straik of his hand should raise his dead?"
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O weel is me for the sign I take"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"That now I may die for my auld sin's sake."
And the wind wears owre the heather.

"For the dead was in wait now fifty year,"
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)
"And now shall I die for his blood's sake here."
And the wind wears owre the heather.

JACOBITE SONG

Now who will speak, and lie not,
  And pledge not life, but give?
Slaves herd with herded cattle:
The dawn grows bright for battle,
And if we die, we die not;
  And if we live, we live.

The faith our fathers fought for,
  The kings our fathers knew,
We fight but as they fought for:
We seek the goal they sought for,
  The chance they hailed and knew,
The praise they strove and wrought for,
  To leave their blood as dew
  On fields that flower anew.

Men live that serve the stranger;
  Hounds live that huntsmen tame:
These life-days of our living
Are days of God's good giving
Where death smiles soft on danger
  And life scowls dark on shame.

And what would you do other,
  Sweet wife, if you were I?
And how should you be other,
My sister, than your brother,
  If you were man as I,
Born of our sire and mother,
  With choice to cower and fly,
  And chance to strike and die?

No churl's our oldworld name is,
  The lands we leave are fair:
But fairer far than these are,
But wide as all the seas are,
But high as heaven the fame is
  That if we die we share.

Our name the night may swallow,
  Our lands the churl may take:
But night nor death may swallow,
Nor hell's nor heaven's dim hollow,
  The star whose height we take,
The star whose light we follow
  For faith's unfaltering sake
  Till hope that sleeps awake.

Soft hope's light lure we serve not,
  Nor follow, fain to find:
Dark time's last word may smite her
Dead, ere man's falsehood blight her:
But though she die, we swerve not,
  Who cast not eye behind.

JACOBITE SONG

Faith speaks when hope dissembles:
  Faith lives when hope lies dead:
If death as life dissembles,
And all that night assembles
  Of stars at dawn lie dead,
Faint hope that smiles and trembles
  May tell not well for dread:
  But faith has heard it said.

Now who will fight, and fly not,
  And grudge not life to give?
And who will strike beside us,
If life's or death's light guide us?
For if we live, we die not,
  And if we die, we live.

THE BALLAD OF DEAD MEN'S BAY

The sea swings owre the slants of sand,
All white with winds that drive;
The sea swirls up to the still dim strand,
Where nae man comes alive.

At the grey soft edge of the fruitless surf
A light flame sinks and springs;
At the grey soft rim of the flowerless turf
A low flame leaps and clings.

What light is this on a sunless shore,
What gleam on a starless sea?
Was it earth's or hell's waste womb that bore
Such births as should not be?

As lithe snakes turning, as bright stars burning,
They bicker and beckon and call;
As wild waves churning, as wild winds yearning,
They flicker and climb and fall.

A soft strange cry from the landward rings—
"What ails the sea to shine?"
A keen sweet note from the spray's rim springs—
"What fires are these of thine?"

A soul am I that was born on earth
For ae day's waesome span:
Death bound me fast on the bourn of birth
Ere I were christened man.

"A light by night, I fleet and fare
Till the day of wrath and woe;
On the hems of earth and the skirts of air
Winds hurl me to and fro."

"O well is thee, though the weird be strange
That bids thee flit and flee;
For hope is child of the womb of change,
And hope keeps watch with thee.

"When the years are gone, and the time is come,
God's grace may give thee grace;
And thy soul may sing, though thy soul were dumb,
And shine before God's face.

"But I, that lighten and revel and roll
With the foam of the plunging sea,
No sign is mine of a breathing soul
That God should pity me.

"Nor death, nor heaven, nor hell, nor birth
Hath part in me nor mine:
Strong lords are these of the living earth
And loveless lords of thine.

"But I that know nor lord nor life
More sure than storm or spray,
Whose breath is made of sport and strife,
Whereon shall I find stay?"

"And wouldst thou change thy doom with me,
Full fain with thee would I:
For the life that lightens and lifts the sea
Is more than earth or sky.

"And what if the day of doubt and doom
Shall save nor smite not me?
I would not rise from the slain world's tomb
If there be no more sea.

"Take he my soul that gave my soul,
And give it thee to keep;
And me, while seas and stars shall roll
Thy life that falls on sleep."

That word went up through the mirk mid sky,
And even to God's own ear:
And the Lord was ware of the keen twin cry,
And wroth was he to hear.

He 's tane the soul of the unsained child
That fled to death from birth;
He 's tane the light of the wan sea wild,
And bid it burn on earth.

He 's given the ghaist of the babe new-born
  The gift of the water-sprite,
To ride on revel from morn to morn
  And roll from night to night.

He 's given the sprite of the wild wan sea
  The gift of the new-born man,
A soul for ever to bide and be
  When the years have filled their span.

When a year was gone and a year was come,
  O loud and loud cried they—
"For the lee-lang year thou hast held us dumb
  Take now thy gifts away!"

O loud and lang they cried on him,
  And sair and sair they prayed:
"Is the face of thy grace as the night's face grim
  For those thy wrath has made?"

A cry more bitter than tears of men
  From the rim of the dim grey sea;—
"Give me my living soul again,
  The soul thou gavest me,
The doom and the dole of kindly men,
  To bide my weird and be!"

A cry more keen from the wild low land
  Than the wail of waves that roll;—
"Take back the gift of a loveless hand,
  Thy gift of doom and dole,
The weird of men that bide on land;
  Take from me, take my soul!"

THE BALLAD OF DEAD MEN'S BAY

The hands that smite are the hands that spare;
  They build and break the tomb;
They turn to darkness and dust and air
  The fruits of the waste earth's womb;
But never the gift of a granted prayer,
  The dole of a spoken doom.

Winds may change at a word unheard,
  But none may change the tides:
The prayer once heard is as God's own word;
  The doom once dealt abides.

And ever a cry goes up by day,
  And ever a wail by night;
And nae ship comes by the weary bay
But her shipmen hear them wail and pray,
  And see with earthly sight
The twofold flames of the twin lights play
Where the sea-banks green and the sea-floods grey
Are proud of peril and fain of prey,
And the sand quakes ever; and ill fare they
  That look upon that light.

DEDICATION

1893

The sea of the years that endure not
Whose tide shall endure till we die
And know what the seasons assure not,
If death be or life be a lie,
Sways hither the spirit and thither,
A waif in the swing of the sea
Whose wrecks are of memories that whither
As leaves of a tree.

We hear not and hail not with greeting
The sound of the wings of the years,
The storm of the sound of them beating,
That none till it pass from him hears:
But tempest nor calm can imperil
The treasures that fade not or fly;
Change bids them not change and be sterile,
Death bids them not die.

Hearts plighted in youth to the royal
High service of hope and of song,
Sealed fast for endurance as loyal,
And proved of the years as they throng,

Conceive not, believe not, and fear not
  That age may be other than youth;
That faith and that friendship may hear not
    And utter not truth.

Not yesterday's light nor to-morrow's
  Gleams nearer or clearer than gleams,
Though joys be forgotten and sorrows
  Forgotten as changes of dreams,
The dawn of the days unforgotten
  That noon could eclipse not or slay,
Whose fruits were as children begotten
    Of dawn upon day.

The years that were flowerful and fruitless,
  The years that were fruitful and dark,
The hopes that were radiant and rootless,
  The hopes that were winged for their mark.
Lie soft in the sepulchres fashioned
  Of hours that arise and subside,
Absorbed and subdued and impassioned,
    In pain or in pride.

But far in the night that entombs them
  The starshine as sunshine is strong,
And clear through the cloud that resumes them
Remembrance, a light and a song,
Rings lustrous as music and hovers
  As birds that impend on the sea,
And thoughts that their prison-house covers
    Arise and are free.

Forgetfulness deep as a prison
  Holds days that are dead for us fast
Till the sepulchre sees rearisen
  The spirit whose reign is the past,
Disentrammelled of darkness, and kindled
  With life that is mightier than death,
When the life that obscured it has dwindled
    And passed as a breath.

But time nor oblivion may darken
  Remembrance whose name will be joy
While memory forgets not to hearken,
  While manhood forgets not the boy
Who heard and exulted in hearing
  The songs of the sunrise of youth
Ring radiant above him, unfearing
    And joyous as truth.

Truth, winged and enkindled with rapture
  And sense of the radiance of yore,
Fulfilled you with power to recapture
  What never might singer before—
The life, the delight, and the sorrow
  Of troublous and chivalrous years
That knew not of night or of morrow,
    Of hopes or of fears.

But wider the wing and the vision
  That quicken the spirit have spread
Since memory beheld with derision
  Man's hope to be more than his dead.

From the mists and the snows and the thunders
  Your spirit has brought for us forth
Light, music, and joy in the wonders
    And charms of the north.

The wars and the woes and the glories
  That quicken and lighten and rain
From the clouds of its chronicled stories,
  The passion, the pride, and the pain,
Whose echoes were mute and the token
  Was lost of the spells that they spake,
Rise bright at your bidding, unbroken
    Of ages that break.

For you, and for none of us other,
  Time is not: the dead that must live
Hold commune with you as a brother
  By grace of the life that you give.
The heart that was in them is in you,
  Their soul in your spirit endures:
The strength of their song is the sinew
    Of this that is yours.

Hence is it that life, everlasting
  As light and as music, abides
In the sound of the surge of it, casting
  Sound back to the surge of the tides,
Till sons of the sons of the Norsemen
  Watch, hurtling to windward and lee,
Round England, unbacked of her horsemen,
    The steeds of the sea.

A CHANNEL PASSAGE

AND OTHER POEMS

IN MEMORY

OF

WILLIAM MORRIS

AND

EDWARD BURNE JONES

A CHANNEL PASSAGE

1855

Forth from Calais, at dawn of night, when sunset
summer on autumn shone,
Fared the steamer alert and loud through seas
whence only the sun was gone:
Soft and sweet as the sky they smiled, and bade
man welcome: a dim sweet hour
Gleamed and whispered in wind and sea, and heaven
was fair as a field in flower.
Stars fulfilled the desire of the darkling world as
with music: the starbright air
Made the face of the sea, if aught may make the
face of the sea, more fair.

Whence came change? Was the sweet night weary
of rest? What anguish awoke in the dark?
Sudden, sublime, the strong storm spake: we heard
the thunders as hounds that bark.
Lovelier if aught may be lovelier than stars, we saw
the lightnings exalt the sky,
Living and lustrous and rapturous as love that is
born but to quicken and lighten and die.

Heaven's own heart at its highest of delight found
utterance in music and semblance in fire:
Thunder on thunder exulted, rejoicing to live and
to satiate the night's desire.

And the night was alive and anhungered of life as a
tiger from toils cast free:
And a rapture of rage made joyous the spirit and
strength of the soul of the sea.
All the weight of the wind bore down on it, freighted
with death for fraught:
And the keen waves kindled and quickened as
things transfigured or things distraught.
And madness fell on them laughing and leaping;
and madness came on the wind:
And the might and the light and the darkness of
storm were as storm in the heart of Ind.
Such glory, such terror, such passion, as lighten
and harrow the far fierce East,
Rang, shone, spake, shuddered around us: the night
was an altar with death for priest.
The channel that sunders England from shores where
never was man born free
Was clothed with the likeness and thrilled with the
strength and the wrath of a tropic sea.
As a wild steed ramps in rebellion, and rears till it
swerves from a backward fall,
The strong ship struggled and reared, and her deck
was upright as a sheer cliff's wall.
Stern and prow plunged under, alternate: a glimpse,
a recoil, a breath,
And she sprang as the life in a god made man
would spring at the throat of death.

Three glad hours, and it seemed not an hour of supreme and supernal joy,
Filled full with delight that revives in remembrance a sea-bird's heart in a boy.
For the central crest of the night was cloud that thundered and flamed, sublime
As the splendour and song of the soul everlasting that quickens the pulse of time.
The glory beholden of man in a vision, the music of light overheard,
The rapture and radiance of battle, the life that abides in the fire of a word,
In the midmost heaven enkindled, was manifest far on the face of the sea,
And the rage in the roar of the voice of the waters was heard but when heaven breathed free.
Far eastward, clear of the covering of cloud, the sky laughed out into light
From the rims of the storm to the sea's dark edge with flames that were flowerlike and white.
The leaping and luminous blossoms of live sheet lightning that laugh as they fade
From the cloud's black base to the black wave's brim rejoiced in the light they made.
Far westward, throned in a silent sky, where life was in lustrous tune,
Shone, sweeter and surer than morning or evening, the steadfast smile of the moon.
The limitless heaven that enshrined them was lovelier than dreams may behold, and deep
As life or as death, revealed and transfigured, may shine on the soul through sleep.

All glories of toil and of triumph and passion and pride that it yearns to know
Bore witness there to the soul of its likeness and kinship, above and below.
The joys of the lightnings, the songs of the thunders, the strong sea's labour and rage,
Were tokens and signs of the war that is life and is joy for the soul to wage.
No thought strikes deeper or higher than the heights and the depths that the night made bare,
Illimitable, infinite, awful and joyful, alive in the summit of air—
Air stilled and thrilled by the tempest that thundered between its reign and the sea's,
Rebellious, rapturous, and transient as faith or as terror that bows men's knees.
No love sees loftier and fairer the form of its godlike vision in dreams
Than the world shone then, when the sky and the sea were as love for a breath's length seems—
One utterly, mingled and mastering and mastered and laughing with love that subsides
As the glad mad night sank panting and satiate with storm, and released the tides.
In the dense mid channel the steam-souled ship hung hovering, assailed and withheld
As a soul born royal, if life or if death be against it, is thwarted and quelled.
As the glories of myriads of glowworms in lustrous grass on a boundless lawn
Were the glories of flames phosphoric that made of the water a light like dawn.

A CHANNEL PASSAGE

A thousand Phosphors, a thousand Hespers, awoke
in the churning sea,
And the swift soft hiss of them living and dying
was clear as a tune could be;
As a tune that is played by the fingers of death on
the keys of life or of sleep,
Audible alway alive in the storm, too fleet for a
dream to keep:
Too fleet, too sweet for a dream to recover and
thought to remember awake:
Light subtler and swifter than lightning, that whis-
pers and laughs in the live storm's wake,
In the wild bright wake of the storm, in the dense
loud heart of the labouring hour,
A harvest of stars by the storm's hand reaped, each
fair as a star-shaped flower.
And sudden and soft as the passing of sleep is the
passing of tempest seemed
When the light and the sound of it sank, and the
glory was gone as a dream half dreamed.
The glory, the terror, the passion that made of the
midnight a miracle, died,
Not slain at a stroke, nor in gradual reluctance
abated of power and of pride;
With strong swift subsidence, awful as power that
is wearied of power upon earth,
As a God that were wearied of power upon heaven,
and were fain of a new God's birth,
The might of the night subsided: the tyranny kin-
dled in darkness fell:
And the sea and the sky put off them the rapture
and radiance of heaven and of hell.

A CHANNEL PASSAGE

The waters, heaving and hungering at heart, made
way, and were wellnigh fain,
For the ship that had fought them, and wrestled,
and revelled in labour, to cease from her pain.
And an end was made of it: only remembrance en-
dures of the glad loud strife;
And the sense that a rapture so royal may come
not again in the passage of life.

THE LAKE OF GAUBE

The sun is lord and god, sublime, serene,
And sovereign on the mountains: earth and air
Lie prone in passion, blind with bliss unseen
By force of sight and might of rapture, fair
As dreams that die and know not what they were.
The lawns, the gorges, and the peaks, are one
Glad glory, thrilled with sense of unison
In strong compulsive silence of the sun.

Flowers dense and keen as midnight stars aflame
And living things of light like flames in flower
That glance and flash as though no hand might tame
Lightnings whose life outshone their stormlit hour
And played and laughed on earth, with all their power
Gone, and with all their joy of life made long
And harmless as the lightning life of song,
Shine sweet like stars when darkness feels them strong.

The deep mild purple flaked with moonbright gold
That makes the scales seem flowers of hardened light,

The flamelike tongue, the feet that noon leaves cold,
The kindly trust in man, when once the sight
Grew less than strange, and faith bade fear take flight,
Outlive the little harmless life that shone
And gladdened eyes that loved it, and was gone
Ere love might fear that fear had looked thereon.

Fear held the bright thing hateful, even as fear,
Whose name is one with hate and horror, saith
That heaven, the dark deep heaven of water near,
Is deadly deep as hell and dark as death.
The rapturous plunge that quickens blood and breath
With pause more sweet than passion, ere they strive
To raise again the limbs that yet would dive
Deeper, should there have slain the soul alive.

As the bright salamander in fire of the noonshine exults and is glad of his day,
The spirit that quickens my body rejoices to pass from the sunlight away,
To pass from the glow of the mountainous flowerage, the high multitudinous bloom,
Far down through the fathomless night of the water, the gladness of silence and gloom.
Death-dark and delicious as death in the dream of a lover and dreamer may be,
It clasps and encompasses body and soul with delight to be living and free:

Free utterly now, though the freedom endure but
the space of a perilous breath,
And living, though girdled about with the darkness
and coldness and strangeness of death:
Each limb and each pulse of the body rejoicing,
each nerve of the spirit at rest,
All sense of the soul's life rapture, a passionate
peace in its blindness blest.
So plunges the downward swimmer, embraced of
the water unfathomed of man,
The darkness unplummeted, icier than seas in mid-
winter, for blessing or ban;
And swiftly and sweetly, when strength and breath
fall short, and the dive is done,
Shoots up as a shaft from the dark depth shot,
sped straight into sight of the sun;
And sheer through the snow-soft water, more dark
than the roof of the pines above,
Strikes forth, and is glad as a bird whose flight is
impelled and sustained of love.
As a sea-mew's love of the sea-wind breasted and
ridden for rapture's sake
Is the love of his body and soul for the darkling
delight of the soundless lake:
As the silent speed of a dream too living to live for
a thought's space more
Is the flight of his limbs through the still strong
chill of the darkness from shore to shore.
Might life be as this is and death be as life that
casts off time as a robe,
The likeness of infinite heaven were a symbol re-
vealed of the lake of Gaube.

Whose thought has fathomed and measured
The darkness of life and of death,
The secret within them treasured,
The spirit that is not breath?
Whose vision has yet beholden
The splendour of death and of life?
Though sunset as dawn be golden,
Is the word of them peace, not strife?
Deep silence answers: the glory
We dream of may be but a dream,
And the sun of the soul wax hoary
As ashes that show not a gleam.
But well shall it be with us ever
Who drive through the darkness here,
If the soul that we live by never,
For aught that a lie saith, fear.

THE PROMISE OF THE HAWTHORN

Spring sleeps and stirs and trembles with desire
  Pure as a babe's that nestles toward the breast.
The world, as yet an all unstricken lyre,
  With all its chords alive and all at rest,
Feels not the sun's hand yet, but feels his breath
  And yearns for love made perfect. Man and bird,
Thrilled through with hope of life that casts out death,
  Wait with a rapturous patience till his word
Speak heaven, and flower by flower and tree by tree
  Give back the silent strenuous utterance. Earth,
Alive awhile and joyful as the sea,
  Laughs not aloud in joy too deep for mirth,
Presageful of perfection of delight,
Till all the unborn green buds be born in white.

HAWTHORN TIDE

I

Dawn is alive in the world, and the darkness of heaven and of earth
Subsides in the light of a smile more sweet than the loud noon's mirth,
Spring lives as a babe lives, glad and divine as the sun, and unsure
If aught so divine and so glad may be worshipped and loved and endure.
A soft green glory suffuses the love-lit earth with delight,
And the face of the noon is fair as the face of the star-clothed night.
Earth knows not and doubts not at heart of the glories again to be:
Sleep doubts not and dreams not how sweet shall the waking beyond her be.
A whole white world of revival awaits May's whisper awhile,
Abides and exults in the bud as a soft hushed laugh in a smile.
As a maid's mouth laughing with love and subdued for the love's sake, May
Shines and withholds for a little the word she revives to say.

When the clouds and the winds and the sunbeams
are warring and strengthening with joy that
they live,
Spring, from reluctance enkindled to rapture,
from slumber to strife,
Stirs, and repents, and is winter, and weeps, and
awakes as the frosts forgive,
And the dark chill death of the woodland is
troubled, and dies into life.
And the honey of heaven, of the hives whence night
feeds full on the springtide's breath,
Fills fuller the lips of the lustrous air with delight
in the dawn:
Each blossom enkindling with love that is life and
subsides with a smile into death
Arises and lightens and sets as a star from her
sphere withdrawn.
Not sleep, in the rapture of radiant dreams, when
sundawn smiles on the night,
Shows earth so sweet with a splendour and fra-
grance of life that is love:
Each blade of the glad live grass, each bud that
receives or rejects the light,
Salutes and responds to the marvel of Maytime
around and above.

Joy gives thanks for the sight and the savour of
Heaven, and is humbled
With awe that exults in thanksgiving: the towers
of the flowers of the trees
Shine sweeter than snows that the hand of the sea-
son has melted and crumbled,

And fair as the foam that is lesser of life than the loveliest of these.
But the sense of a life more lustrous with joy and enkindled of glory
Than man's was ever or may be, and briefer than joys most brief,
Bids man's heart bend and adore, be the man's head golden or hoary,
As it leapt but a breath's time since and saluted the flower and the leaf.
The rapture that springs into love at the sight of the world's exultation
Takes not a sense of rebuke from the sense of triumphant awe:
But the spirit that quickens the body fulfils it with mute adoration,
And the knees would fain bow down as the eyes that rejoiced and saw.

II

Fair and sublime as the face of the dawn is the splendour of May,
But the sky's and the sea's joy fades not as earth's pride passes away.
Yet hardly the sun's first lightning or laughter of love on the sea
So humbles the heart into worship that knows not or doubts if it be
As the first full glory beholden again of the life new-born
That hails and applauds with inaudible music the season of morn.

A day's length since, and it was not: a night's length
more, and the sun
Salutes and enkindles a world of delight as a strange
world won.
A new life answers and thrills to the kiss of the
young strong year,
And the glory we see is as music we hear not, and
dream that we hear.
From blossom to blossom the live tune kindles, from
tree to tree,
And we know not indeed if we hear not the song
of the life we see.

For the first blithe day that beholds it and worships
and cherishes cannot but sing
With a louder and lustier delight in the sun and
the sunlit earth
Than the joy of the days that beheld but the soft
green dawn of the slow faint spring
Glad and afraid to be glad, and subdued in a
shamefast mirth.
When the first bright knoll of the woodland world
laughs out into fragrant light,
The year's heart changes and quickens with sense
of delight in desire,
And the kindling desire is one with thanksgiving
for utter fruition of sight,
For sight and for sense of a world that the sun
finds meet for his lyre.
Music made of the morning that smites from the
chords of the mute world song

Trembles and quickens and lightens, unfelt, unbeholden, unheard,
From blossom on blossom that climbs and exults in the strength of the sun grown strong,
And answers the word of the wind of the spring with the sun's own word.

Hard on the skirt of the deep soft copses that spring refashions,
Triumphs and towers to the height of the crown of a wildwood tree
One royal hawthorn, sublime and serene as the joy that impassions
Awe that exults in thanksgiving for sight of the grace we see,
The grace that is given of a god that abides for a season, mysterious
And merciful, fervent and fugitive, seen and unknown and adored:
His presence is felt in the light and the fragrance, elate and imperious,
His laugh and his breath in the blossom are love's, the beloved soul's lord.
For surely the soul if it loves is beloved of the god as a lover
Whose love is not all unaccepted, a worship not utterly vain:
So full, so deep is the joy that revives for the soul to recover
Yearly, beholden of hope and of memory in sunshine and rain.

III

Wonder and love stand silent, stricken at heart and stilled.
But yet is the cup of delight and of worship unpledged and unfilled.
A handsbreadth hence leaps up, laughs out as an angel crowned,
A strong full fountain of flowers overflowing above and around.
The boughs and the blossoms in triumph salute with adoring mirth
The womb that bare them, the glad green mother, the sunbright earth.
Downward sweeping, as song subsides into silence, none
May hear what sound is the word's they speak to the brooding sun.
None that hearken may hear: man may but pass and adore,
And humble his heart in thanksgiving for joy that is now no more.
And sudden, afront and ahead of him, joy is alive and aflame
On the shrine whose incense is given of the godhead, again the same.

I

Pale and pure as a maiden secluded in secret and cherished with fear,
One sweet glad hawthorn smiles as it shrinks under shelter, screened

By two strong brethren whose bounteous blossom
outsoars it, year after year,
While earth still cleaves to the live spring's breast
as a babe unweaned.
Never was amaranth fairer in fields where heroes
of old found rest,
Never was asphodel sweeter: but here they en-
dure not long,
Though ever the sight that salutes them again and
adores them awhile is blest,
And the heart is a hymn, and the sense is a soul,
and the soul is a song.
Alone on a dyke's trenched edge, and afar from
the blossoming wildwood's verge,
Laughs and lightens a sister, triumphal in love-lit
pride;
Clothed round with the sun, and inviolate: her
blossoms exult as the springtide surge,
When the wind and the dawn enkindle the snows
of the shoreward tide.

Hardly the worship of old that rejoiced as it knelt
in the vision
Shown of the God new-born whose breath is the
spirit of spring
Hailed ever with love more strong and defiant of
death's derision
A joy more perfect than here we mourn for as
May takes wing.
Time gives it and takes it again and restores it:
the glory, the wonder,
The triumph of lustrous blossom that makes of
the steep sweet bank

One visible marvel of music inaudible, over and under,
Attuned as in heaven, pass hence and return for the sun to thank.
The stars and the sun give thanks for the glory bestowed and beholden,
For the gladness they give and rejoice in, the night and the dawn and the day:
But nought they behold when the world is aflower and the season is golden
Makes answer as meet and as sweet as the flower that itself is May.

THE PASSING OF THE HAWTHORN

The coming of the hawthorn brings on earth
Heaven: all the spring speaks out in one sweet word,
And heaven grows gladder, knowing that earth has heard.
Ere half the flowers are jubilant in birth,
The splendour of the laughter of their mirth
Dazzles delight with wonder: man and bird
Rejoice and worship, stilled at heart and stirred
With rapture girt about with awe for girth.

The passing of the hawthorn takes away
Heaven: all the spring falls dumb, and all the soul
Sinks down in man for sorrow. Night and day
Forego the joy that made them one and whole.
The change that falls on every starry spray
Bids, flower by flower, the knell of springtime toll.

TO A BABY KINSWOMAN

Love, whose light thrills heaven and earth,
Smiles and weeps upon thy birth,
Child, whose mother's love-lit eyes
Watch thee but from Paradise.
Sweetest sight that earth can give,
Sweetest light of eyes that live,
Ours must needs, for hope withdrawn,
Hail with tears thy soft spring dawn.
Light of hope whose star hath set,
Light of love whose sun lives yet,
Holier, happier, heavenlier love
Breathes about thee, burns above,
Surely, sweet, than ours can be,
Shed from eyes we may not see,
Though thine own may see them shine
Night and day, perchance, on thine.
Sun and moon that lighten earth
Seem not fit to bless thy birth:
Scarce the very stars we know
Here seem bright enough to show
Whence in unimagined skies
Glows the vigil of such eyes.

TO A BABY KINSWOMAN

Theirs whose heart is as a sea
Swoln with sorrowing love of thee
Fain would share with thine the sight
Seen alone of babes aright,
Watched of eyes more sweet than flowers
Sleeping or awake: but ours
Can but deem or dream or guess
Thee not wholly motherless.
Might they see or might they know
What nor faith nor hope may show,
We whose hearts yearn toward thee now
Then were blest and wise as thou.
Had we half thy knowledge,—had
Love such wisdom,—grief were glad,
Surely, lit by grace of thee;
Life were sweet as death may be.
Now the law that lies on men
Bids us mourn our dead: but then
Heaven and life and earth and death,
Quickened as by God's own breath,
All were turned from sorrow and strife:
Earth and death were heaven and life.
All too far are then and now
Sundered: none may be as thou.
Yet this grace is ours—a sign
Of that goodlier grace of thine,
Sweet, and thine alone—to see
Heaven, and heaven's own love, in thee.
Bless them, then, whose eyes caress
Thee, as only thou canst bless.
Comfort, faith, assurance, love,
Shine around us, brood above,

TO A BABY KINSWOMAN

Fear grows hope, and hope grows wise,
Thrilled and lit by children's eyes.
Yet in ours the tears unshed,
Child, for hope that death leaves dead,
Needs must burn and tremble; thou
Knowest not, seest not, why nor how,
More than we know whence or why
Comes on babes that laugh and lie
Half asleep, in sweet-lipped scorn,
Light of smiles outlightening morn,
Whence enkindled as is earth
By the dawn's less radiant birth
All the body soft and sweet
Smiles on us from face to feet
When the rose-red hands would fain
Reach the rose-red feet in vain.
Eyes and hands that worship thee
Watch and tend, adore and see
All these heavenly sights, and give
Thanks to see and love and live.
Yet, of all that hold thee dear,
Sweet, the dearest smiles not here.
Thine alone is now the grace,
Haply, still to see her face;
Thine, thine only now the sight
Whence we dream thine own takes light.
Yet, though faith and hope live blind,
Yet they live in heart and mind
Strong and keen as truth may be:
Yet, though blind as grief were we
Inly for a weeping-while,
Sorrow's self before thy smile

TO A BABY KINSWOMAN

Smiles and softens, knowing that yet,
Far from us though heaven be set,
Love, bowed down for thee to bless,
Dares not call thee motherless.

May 1894.

THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

ἐς τὸ πᾶν δέ σοι λέγω,
βωμὸν αἴδεσαι δίκας·
μηδέ νιν
κέρδος ἰδὼν ἀθέῳ ποδὶ λὰξ ἀτίσῃς·
ποινὰ γὰρ ἐπέσται.
κύριον μένει τέλος.

Æsch. *Eum.* 538–544

πάρα τὸ φῶς ἰδεῖν.

Æsch. *Cho.* 972

THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I

Light and night, whose clouds and glories change
and mingle and divide,
Veil the truth whereof they witness, show the truth
of things they hide.
Through the darkness and the splendour of the
centuries, loud or dumb,
Shines and wanes and shines the spirit, lit with love
of life to come.
Man, the soul made flesh, that knows not death
from life, and fain would know,
Sees the face of time change colour as its tides
recoil and flow.
All his hope and fear and faith and doubt, if aught
at all they be,
Live the life of clouds and sunbeams, born of heaven
or earth or sea.
All are buoyed and blown and brightened by their
hour's evasive breath:
All subside and quail and darken when their hour
is done to death.
Yet, ere faith, a wandering water, froze and curdled
into creeds,
Earth, elate as heaven, adored the light that quick-
ens dreams to deeds.

Invisible: eye hath not seen it, and ear hath not
heard as the spirit hath heard
From the shrine that is lit not of sunlight or starlight
the sound of a limitless word.
And visible: none that hath eyes to behold what the
spirit must perish or see
Can choose but behold it and worship: a shrine that
if light were as darkness would be.
Of cloud and of change is the form of the fashion
that man may behold of it wrought:
Of iron and truth is the mystic mid altar, where
worship is none but of thought.
No prayer may go up to it, climbing as incense of
gladness or sorrow may climb:
No rapture of music may ruffle the silence that
guards it, and hears not of time.
As the winds of the wild blind ages alternate in
passion of light and of cloud,
So changes the shape of the veil that enshrouds it
with darkness and light for a shroud.
And the winds and the clouds and the suns fall
silent, and fade out of hearing or sight,
And the shrine stands fast and is changed not, whose
likeness was changed as a cloud in the night.

All the storms of time, and wrath of many winds,
may carve no trace
On the viewless altar, though the veil bear many
a name and face:
Many a live God's likeness woven, many a script-
ure dark with awe,
Bids the veil seem verier iron than the word of
life's own law.

Till the might of change hath rent it with a rushing wind in twain,
Stone or steel it seems, whereon the wrath of chance is wreaked in vain:
Stone or steel, and all behind it or beyond its lifted sign
Cloud and vapour, no subsistence of a change-unstricken shrine.
God by god flits past in thunder, till his glories turn to shades:
God to god bears wondering witness how his gospel flames and fades.
More was each of these, while yet they were, than man their servant seemed:
Dead are all of these, and man survives who made them while he dreamed.

Yet haply or surely, if vision were surer than theirs who rejoiced that they saw,
Man might not but see, through the darkness of godhead, the light that is surety and law.
On the stone that the close-drawn cloud which veils it awhile makes cloudlike stands
The word of the truth everlasting, unspoken of tongues and unwritten of hands.
By the sunbeams and storms of the centuries engraven, and approved of the soul as it reads,
It endures as a token dividing the light from the darkness of dreams and of deeds.
The faces of gods on the face of it carven, or gleaming behind and above,
Star-glorified Uranus, thunderous Jehovah, for terror or worship or love,

Change, wither, and brighten as flowers that the
wind of eternity sheds upon time,
All radiant and transient and awful and mortal,
and leave it unmarred and sublime.
As the tides that return and recede are the fears
and the hopes of the centuries that roll,
Requenched and rekindled: but strong as the sun
is the sense of it shrined in the soul.

II

In the days when time was not, in the time when
days were none,
Ere sorrow had life to lot, ere earth gave thanks for
the sun,
Ere man in his darkness waking adored what the
soul in him could,
And the manifold God of his making was manifest
evil and good,
One law from the dim beginning abode and abides
in the end,
In sight of him sorrowing and sinning with none
but his faith for friend.
Dark were the shadows around him, and darker the
glories above,
Ere light from beyond them found him, and bade
him for love's sake love.
About him was darkness, and under and over him
darkness: the night
That conceived him and bore him had thunder for
utterance and lightning for light.

The dust of death was the dust of the ways that the tribes of him trod:
And he knew not if just or unjust were the might of the mystery of God.
Strange horror and hope, strange faith and unfaith, were his boon and his bane:
And the God of his trust was the wraith of the soul or the ghost of it slain.
A curse was on death as on birth, and a Presence that shone as a sword
Shed menace from heaven upon earth that beheld him, and hailed him her Lord.
Sublime and triumphant as fire or as lightning, he kindled the skies,
And withered with dread the desire that would look on the light of his eyes.
Earth shuddered with worship, and knew not if hell were not hot in her breath;
If birth were not sin, and the dew of the morning the sweat of her death.
The watchwords of evil and good were unspoken of men and unheard:
They were shadows that willed as he would, that were made and unmade by his word.
His word was darkness and light, and a wisdom that makes men mad
Sent blindness upon them for sight, that they saw but and heard as he bade.
Cast forth and corrupt from the birth by the crime of creation, they stood
Convicted of evil on earth by the grace of a God found good.

The grace that enkindled and quickened the darkness of hell with flame
Bade man, though the soul in him sickened, obey, and give praise to his name.
The still small voice of the spirit whose life is as plague's hot breath
Bade man shed blood, and inherit the life of the kingdom of death.

"Bring now for blood-offering thy son to mine altar, and bind him and slay,
That the sin of my bidding be done": and the soul in the slave said, "Yea."
Yea, not nay, was the word: and the sacrifice offered withal
Was neither of beast nor of bird, but the soul of a man, God's thrall.
And the word of his servant spoken was fire, and the light of a sword,
When the bondage of Israel was broken, and Sinai shrank from the Lord.
With splendour of slaughter and thunder of song as the sound of the sea
Were the foes of him stricken in sunder and silenced as storms that flee.
Terror and trust and the pride of the chosen, approved of his choice,
Saw God in the whirlwind ride, and rejoiced as the winds rejoice.
Subdued and exalted and kindled and quenched by the sense of his might,
Faith flamed and exulted and dwindled, and saw not, and clung to the sight.

The wastes of the wilderness brightened and trembled with rapture and dread
When the word of him thundered and lightened and spake through the quick and the dead.
The chant of the prophetess, louder and loftier than tempest and wave,
Rang triumph more ruthless and prouder than death, and profound as the grave.
And sweet as the moon's word spoken in smiles that the blown clouds mar
The psalmist's witness in token arose as the speech of a star.
Starlight supreme, and the tender desire of the moon, were as one
To rebuke with compassion the splendour and strength of the godlike sun.
God softened and changed: and the word of his chosen, a fire at the first,
Bade man, as a beast or a bird, now slake at the springs his thirst.
The souls that were sealed unto death as the bones of the dead lie sealed
Rose thrilled and redeemed by the breath of the dawn on the flame-lit field.
The glories of darkness, cloven with music of thunder, shrank
As the web of the word was unwoven that spake, and the soul's tide sank.
And the starshine of midnight that covered Arabia with light as a robe,
Waxed fiery with utterance that hovered and flamed through the whirlwind on Job.

And prophet to prophet and vision to vision made answer sublime,
Till the valley of doom and decision was merged in the tides of time.

III

Then, soft as the dews of night,
As the star of the sundawn bright,
As the heart of the sea's hymn deep,
And sweet as the balm of sleep,
Arose on the world a light
Too pure for the skies to keep.

With music sweeter and stranger than heaven had heard
When the dark east thrilled with light from a saviour's word
And a God grew man to endure as a man and abide
The doom of the will of the Lord of the loud world's tide,
Whom thunders utter, and tempest and darkness hide,
With larger light than flamed from the peak whereon
Prometheus, bound as the sun to the world's wheel, shone,
A presence passed and abode but on earth a span,
And love's own light as a river before him ran,
And the name of God for a while upon earth was man.

O star that wast not and wast for the world a sun,
O light that was quenched of priests, and its work undone,

O Word that wast not as man's or as God's, if God
Be Lord but of hosts whose tread was as death's that trod
On souls that felt but his wrath as an unseen rod,
What word, what praise, what passion of hopeless prayer,
May now rise up to thee, loud as in years that were,
From years that gaze on the works of thy servants wrought
While strength was in them to satiate the lust of thought
That craved in thy name for blood as the quest it sought?

From the dark high places of Rome
Far over the westward foam
God's heaven and the sun saw swell
The fires of the high priest's hell,
And shrank as they curled and clomb
And revelled and ravaged and fell.

IV

Yet was not the work of thy word all withered with wasting flame
By the sons of the priests that had slain thee, whose evil was wrought in thy name.
From the blood-sodden soil that was blasted with fires of the Church and her creed
Sprang rarely but surely, by grace of thy spirit, a flower for a weed.

Thy spirit, unfelt of thy priests who blasphemed
thee, enthralled and enticed
To deathward a child that was even as the child we
behold in Christ.
The Moors, they told her, beyond bright Spain and
the strait brief sea,
Dwelt blind in the light that for them was as dark-
ness, and knew not thee.
But the blood of the martyrs whose mission was
witness for God, they said,
Might raise to redemption the souls that were here,
in the sun's sight, dead.
And the child rose up in the night, when the stars
were as friends that smiled,
And sought her brother, and wakened the younger
and tenderer child.
From the heaven of a child's glad sleep to the heav-
en of the sight of her eyes
He woke, and brightened, and hearkened, and kin-
dled as stars that rise.
And forth they fared together to die for the stran-
ger's sake,
For the souls of the slayers that should slay them,
and turn from their sins, and wake.
And the light of the love that lit them awhile on a
brief blind quest
Shines yet on the tear-lit smile that salutes them,
belated and blest.

And the girl, full-grown to the stature of godhead
in womanhood, spake
The word that sweetens and lightens her creed for
her great love's sake.

From the godlike heart of Theresa the prayer above all prayers heard,
The cry as of God made woman, a sweet blind wonderful word,
Sprang sudden as flame, and kindled the darkness of faith with love,
And the hollow of hell from beneath shone, quickened of heaven from above.
Yea, hell at her word grew heaven, as she prayed that if God thought well
She there might stand in the gateway, that none might pass into hell.
Not Hermes, guardian and guide, God, herald, and comforter, shed
Such lustre of hope from the life of his light on the night of the dead.
Not Pallas, wiser and mightier in mercy than Rome's God shone,
Wore ever such raiment of love as the soul of a saint put on.
So blooms as a flower of the darkness a star of the midnight born,
Of the midnight's womb and the blackness of darkness, and flames like morn.
Nor yet may the dawn extinguish or hide it, when churches and creeds
Are withered and blasted with sunlight as poisonous and blossomless weeds.
So springs and strives through the soil that the legions of darkness have trod,
From the root that is man, from the soul in the body, the flower that is God.

V

Ages and creeds that drift
Through change and cloud uplift
The soul that soars and seeks her sovereign shrine,
Her faith's veiled altar, there
To find, when praise and prayer
Fall baffled, if the darkenss be divine.
Lights change and shift through star and sun:
Night, clothed with might of immemorial years, is one.

Day, born and slain of night,
Hath hardly life in sight
And she that bears and slays him and survives,
And gives us back for one
Cloud-thwarted fiery sun
The myriad mysteries of the lambent lives
Whose starry soundless music saith
That light and life wax perfect even through night and death.

In vain had darkness heard
Light speak the lustrous word
That cast out faith in all save truth and love:
In vain death's quickening rod
Bade man rise up as God,
Touched as with life unknown in heaven above:
Fear turned his light of love to fire
That wasted earth, yet might not slay the soul's desire.

Though death seem life, and night
Bid fear call darkness light,
Time, faith, and hope keep trust, through sorrow and shame,
Till Christ, by Paul cast out,
Return, and all the rout
Of raging slaves whose prayer defiles his name
Rush headlong to the deep, and die,
And leave no sign to say that faith once heard them lie.

VI

Since man, with a child's pride proud, and abashed as a child and afraid,
Made God in his likeness, and bowed him to worship the Maker he made,
No faith more dire hath enticed man's trust than the saint's whose creed
Made Caiaphas one with Christ, that worms on the cross might feed.
Priests gazed upon God in the eyes of a babe newborn, and therein
Beheld not heaven, and the wise glad secret of love, but sin.
Accursed of heaven, and baptized with the baptism of hatred and hell,
They spat on the name they despised and adored as a sign and a spell.
"Lord Christ, thou art God, and a liar: they were children of wrath, not of grace,
Unbaptized, unredeemed from the fire they were born for, who smiled in thy face."

Of such is the kingdom—he said it—of heaven: and the heavenly word
Shall live when religion is dead, and when falsehood is dumb shall be heard.
And the message of James and of John was as Christ's and as love's own call:
But wrath passed sentence thereon when Annas replied in Paul.
The dark old God who had slain him grew one with the Christ he slew,
And poison was rank in the grain that with growth of his gospel grew.
And the blackness of darkness brightened: and red in the heart of the flame
Shone down, as a blessing that lightened, the curse of a new God's name.
Through centuries of burning and trembling belief as a signal it shone,
Till man, soul-sick of dissembling, bade fear and her frauds begone.
God Cerberus yelps from his throats triune: but his day, which was night,
Is quenched, with its stars and the notes of its night-birds, in silence and light.
The flames of its fires and the psalms of their psalmists are darkened and dumb:
Strong winter has withered the palms of his angels, and stricken them numb.
God, father of lies, God, son of perdition, God, spirit of ill,
Thy will that for ages was done is undone as a dead God's will.

Not Mahomet's sword could slay thee, nor Borgia's
or Calvin's praise:
But the scales of the spirit that weigh thee are
weighted with truth, and it slays.
The song of the day of thy fury, when nature and
death shall quail,
Rings now as the thunders of Jewry, the ghost of a
dead world's tale.
That day and its doom foreseen and foreshadowed
on earth, when thou,
Lord God, wast lord of the keen dark season, are
sport for us now.
Thy claws were clipped and thy fangs plucked out
by the hands that slew
Men, lovers of man, whose pangs bore witness if
truth were true.
Man crucified rose again from the sepulchre builded
to be
No grave for the souls of the men who denied thee,
but, Lord, for thee.

When Bruno's spirit aspired from the flames that
thy servants fed,
The spirit of faith was fired to consume thee and
leave thee dead.
When the light of the sunlike eyes whence laughter
lightened and flamed
Bade France and the world be wise, faith saw thee
naked and shamed.
When wisdom deeper and sweeter than Rabelais
veiled and revealed
Found utterance diviner and meeter for truth whence
anguish is healed,

Whence fear and hate and belief in thee, fed by thy grace from above,
Fall stricken, and utmost grief takes light from the lustre of love,
When Shakespeare shone into birth, and the world he beheld grew bright,
Thy kingdom was ended on earth, and the darkness it shed was light.
In him all truth and the glory thereof and the power and the pride,
The song of the soul and her story, bore witness that fear had lied.
All hope, all wonder, all trust, all doubt that knows not of fear,
The love of the body, the lust of the spirit to see and to hear,
All womanhood, fairer than love could conceive or desire or adore,
All manhood, radiant above all heights that it held of yore,
Lived by the life of his breath, with the speech of his soul's will spake,
And the light lit darkness to death whence never the dead shall wake.
For the light that lived in the sound of the song of his speech was one
With the light of the wisdom that found earth's tune in the song of the sun;
His word with the word of the lord most high of us all on earth,
Whose soul was a lyre and a sword, whose death was a deathless birth.

Him too we praise as we praise our own who as he
stand strong;
Him, Æschylus, ancient of days, whose word is the
perfect song.
When Caucasus showed to the sun and the sea
what a God could endure,
When wisdom and light were one, and the hands
of the matricide pure,
A song too subtle for psalmist or prophet of Jewry
to know,
Elate and profound as the calmest or stormiest of
waters that flow,
A word whose echoes were wonder and music of
fears overcome,
Bade Sinai bow, and the thunder of godhead on
Horeb be dumb.
The childless children of night, strong daughters of
doom and dread,
The thoughts and the fears that smite the soul, and
its life lies dead,
Stood still and were quelled by the sound of his
word and the light of his thought,
And the God that in man lay bound was unbound
from the bonds he had wrought.
Dark fear of a lord more dark than the dreams of
his worshippers knew
Fell dead, and the corpse lay stark in the sunlight of
truth shown true.

VII

Time, and truth his child, though terror set earth
and heaven at odds,
See the light of manhood rise on the twilight of the
Gods.

Light is here for souls to see, though the stars of faith be dead:
All the sea that yearned and trembled receives the sun instead.
All the shadows on the spirit when fears and dreams were strong,
All perdition, all redemption, blind rain-stars watched so long,
Love whose root was fear, thanksgiving that cowered beneath the rod,
Feel the light that heals and withers: night weeps upon her God.
All the names wherein the incarnate Lord lived his day and died
Fade from suns to stars, from stars into darkness undescried.
Christ the man lives yet, remembered of man as dreams that leave
Light on eyes that wake and know not if memory bid them grieve.
Fire sublime as lightning shines, and exults in thunder yet,
Where the battle wields the name and the sword of Mahomet.
Far above all wars and gospels, all ebb and flow of time,
Lives the soul that speaks in silence, and makes mute earth sublime.
Still for her, though years and ages be blinded and bedinned,
Mazed with lightnings, crazed with thunders, life rides and guides the wind.

THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Death may live or death may die, and the truth be
light or night:
Not for gain of heaven may man put away the rule
of right.

A NEW YEAR'S EVE

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI DIED DECEMBER 29, 1894.

THE stars are strong in the deeps of the lustrous night,
Cold and splendid as death if his dawn be bright;
Cold as the cast-off garb that is cold as clay,
Splendid and strong as a spirit intense as light.

A soul more sweet than the morning of new-born May
Has passed with the year that has passed from the world away.
A song more sweet than the morning's first-born song
Again will hymn not among us a new year's day.

Not here, not here shall the carol of joy grown strong
Ring rapture now, and uplift us, a spell-struck throng,
From dream to vision of life that the soul may see
By death's grace only, if death do its trust no wrong.

A NEW YEAR'S EVE

Scarce yet the days and the starry nights are three
Since here among us a spirit abode as we,
  Girt round with life that is fettered in bonds of time,
And clasped with darkness about as is earth with sea.

And now, more high than the vision of souls may climb,
The soul whose song was as music of stars that chime,
  Clothed round with life as of dawn and the mounting sun,
Sings, and we know not here of the song sublime.

No word is ours of it now that the songs are done
Whence here we drank of delight as in freedom won,
  In deep deliverance given from the bonds we bore.
There is none to sing as she sang upon earth, not one.

We heard awhile: and for us who shall hear no more
The sound as of waves of light on a starry shore
  Awhile bade brighten and yearn as a father's face
The face of death, divine as in days of yore.

The grey gloom quickened and quivered: the sunless place
Thrilled, and the silence deeper than time or space

Seemed now not all everlasting. Hope grew strong,
And love took comfort, given of the sweet song's grace.

Love that finds not on earth, where it finds but wrong,
Love that bears not the bondage of years in throng
Shone to show for her, higher than the years that mar,
The life she looked and longed for as love must long.

Who knows? We know not. Afar, if the dead be far,
Alive, if the dead be alive as the soul's works are,
The soul whose breath was among us a heaven-ward song
Sings, loves, and shines as it shines for us here a star.

IN A ROSARY

Through the low grey archway children's feet that pass
Quicken, glad to find the sweetest haunt of all.
Brightest wildflowers gleaming deep in lustiest grass,
Glorious weeds that glisten through the green sea's glass,
Match not now this marvel, born to fade and fall.

Roses like a rainbow wrought of roses rise
Right and left and forward, shining toward the sun.
Nay, the rainbow lit of sunshine droops and dies
Ere we dream it hallows earth and seas and skies;
Ere delight may dream it lives, its life is done.

Round the border hemmed with high deep hedges round
Go the children, peering over or between
Where the dense bright oval wall of box inwound,
Reared about the roses fast within it bound,
Gives them grace to glance at glories else unseen.

Flower outlightening flower and tree outflowering tree
Feed and fill the sense and spirit full with joy.

Nought awhile they know of outer earth and sea:
Here enough of joy it is to breathe and be:
Here the sense of life is one for girl and boy.

Heaven above them, bright as children's eyes or dreams,
Earth about them, sweet as glad soft sleep can show
Earth and sky and sea, a world that scarcely seems
Even in children's eyes less fair than life that gleams
Through the sleep that none but sinless eyes may know.

Near beneath, and near above, the terraced ways
Wind or stretch and bask or blink against the sun.
Hidden here from sight on soft or stormy days
Lies and laughs with love toward heaven, at silent gaze,
All the radiant rosary—all its flowers made one.

All the multitude of roses towering round
Dawn and noon and night behold as one full flower,
Fain of heaven and loved of heaven, curbed and crowned,
Raised and reared to make this plot of earthly ground
Heavenly, could but heaven endure on earth an hour.
Swept away, made nothing now for ever, dead,
Still the rosary lives and shines on memory, free
Now from fear of death or change as childhood, fled
Years on years before its last live leaves were shed:
None may mar it now, as none may stain the sea.

THE HIGH OAKS

BARKING HALL, JULY 19TH, 1896

FOURSCORE years and seven
Light and dew from heaven
Have fallen with dawn on these glad woods each day
Since here was born, even here,
A birth more bright and dear
Than ever a younger year
Hath seen or shall till all these pass away,
Even all the imperious pride of these,
The woodland ways majestic now with towers of trees.

Love itself hath nought
Touched of tenderest thought
With holiest hallowing of memorial grace
For memory, blind with bliss,
To love, to clasp, to kiss,
So sweetly strange as this,
The sense that here the sun first hailed her face,
A babe at Her glad mother's breast,
And here again beholds it more beloved and blest.

Love's own heart, a living
Spring of strong thanksgiving,
Can bid no strength of welling song find way
When all the soul would seek
One word for joy to speak,
And even its strength makes weak
The too strong yearning of the soul to say
What may not be conceived or said
While darkness makes division of the quick and dead.

Haply, where the sun
Wanes, and death is none,
The word known here of silence only, held
Too dear for speech to wrong,
May leap in living song
Forth, and the speech be strong
As here the silence whence it yearned and welled
From hearts whose utterance love sealed fast
Till death perchance might give it grace to live at last.

Here we have our earth
Yet, with all the mirth
Of all the summers since the world began,
All strengths of rest and strife
And love-lit love of life
Where death has birth to wife,
And where the sun speaks, and is heard of man:
Yea, half the sun's bright speech is heard,
And like the sea the soul of man gives back his word.

Earth's enkindled heart
Bears benignant part
In the ardent heaven's auroral pride of prime:
If ever home on earth
Were found of heaven's grace worth
So God-beloved a birth
As here makes bright the fostering face of time,
Here, heaven bears witness, might such grace
Fall fragrant as the dewfall on that brightening face.

Here, for mine and me,
All that eyes may see
Hath more than all the wide world else of good,
All nature else of fair:
Here as none otherwhere
Heaven is the circling air,
Heaven is the homestead, heaven the wold, the wood:
The fragrance with the shadow spread
From broadening wings of cedars breathes of dawn's bright bed.

Once a dawn rose here
More divine and dear,
Rose on a birth-bed brighter far than dawn's,
Whence all the summer grew
Sweet as when earth was new
And pure as Eden's dew:
And yet its light lives on these lustrous lawns,
Clings round these wildwood ways, and cleaves
To the aisles of shadow and sun that wind unweaves and weaves.

Thoughts that smile and weep,
Dreams that hallow sleep,
Brood in the branching shadows of the trees,
Tall trees at agelong rest
Wherein the centuries nest,
Whence, blest as these are blest,
We part, and part not from delight in these;
Whose comfort, sleeping as awake,
We bear about within us as when first it spake.

Comfort as of song
Grown with time more strong,
Made perfect and prophetic as the sea,
Whose message, when it lies
Far off our hungering eyes,
Within us prophesies
Of life not ours, yet ours as theirs may be
Whose souls far off us shine and sing
As ere they sprang back sunward, swift as fire might spring.

All this oldworld pleasance
Hails a hallowing presence,
And thrills with sense of more than summer near,
And lifts toward heaven more high
The song-surpassing cry
Of rapture that July
Lives, for her love who makes it loveliest here;
For joy that she who here first drew
The breath of life she gave me breathes it here anew.

THE HIGH OAKS

Never birthday born
Highest in height of morn
Whereout the star looks forth that leads the sun
Shone higher in love's account,
Still seeing the mid noon mount
From the eager dayspring's fount
Each year more lustrous, each like all in one;
Whose light around us and above
We could not see so lovely save by grace of love.

BARKING HALL: A YEAR AFTER

Still the sovereign trees
Make the sundawn's breeze
More bright, more sweet, more heavenly than it rose,
As wind and sun fulfil
Their living rapture: still
Noon, dawn, and evening thrill
With radiant change the immeasurable repose
Wherewith the woodland wilds lie blest
And feel how storms and centuries rock them still to rest.

Still the love-lit place
Given of God such grace
That here was born on earth a birth divine
Gives thanks with all its flowers
Through all their lustrous hours,
From all its birds and bowers
Gives thanks that here they felt her sunset shine
Where once her sunrise laughed, and bade
The life of all the living things it lit be glad.

Soft as light and strong
Rises yet their song
And thrills with pride the cedar-crested lawn
And every brooding dove.
But she, beloved above
All utterance known of love,
Abides no more the change of night and dawn,
Beholds no more with earth-born eye
These woods that watched her waking here where
all things die.

Not the light that shone
When she looked thereon
Shines on them or shall shine for ever here.
We know not, save when sleep
Slays death, who fain would keep
His mystery dense and deep,
Where shines the smile we held and hold so dear.
Dreams only, thrilled and filled with love,
Bring back its light ere dawn leave nought alive
above.

Nought alive awake
Sees the strong dawn break
On all the dreams that dying night bade live.
Yet scarce the intolerant sense
Of day's harsh evidence
How came their word and whence
Strikes dumb the song of thanks it bids them
give,
The joy that answers as it heard
And lightens as it saw the light that spake the word.

BARKING HALL: A YEAR AFTER

Night and sleep and dawn
Pass with dreams withdrawn:
But higher above them far than noon may climb
Love lives and turns to light
The deadly noon of night.
His fiery spirit of sight
Endures no curb of change or darkling time.
Even earth and transient things of earth
Even here to him bear witness not of death but birth.

MUSIC: AN ODE

I

Was it light that spake from the darkness, or
music that shone from the word,
When the night was enkindled with sound of the
sun or the first-born bird?
Souls enthralled and entrammelled in bondage of
seasons that fall and rise,
Bound fast round with the fetters of flesh, and
blinded with light that dies,
Lived not surely till music spake, and the spirit of
life was heard.

II

Music, sister of sunrise, and herald of life to be,
Smiled as dawn on the spirit of man, and the
thrall was free.
Slave of nature and serf of time, the bondman of
life and death,
Dumb with passionless patience that breathed but
forlorn and reluctant breath,
Heard, beheld, and his soul made answer, and com-
muned aloud with the sea.

III

Morning spake, and he heard: and the passionate
silent noon
Kept for him not silence: and soft from the mount'
ing moon
Fell the sound of her splendour, heard as dawn's
in the breathless night,
Not of men but of birds whose note bade man's soul
quicken and leap to light:
And the song of it spake, and the light and the
darkness of earth were as chords in tune.

THE CENTENARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

AUGUST 1898

"Horatio Nelson—Honor est a Nilo"

A HUNDRED years have lightened and have waned
Since ancient Nile by grace of Nelson gained
  A glory higher in story now than time
Saw when his kings were gods that raged and reigned.

The day that left even England more sublime
And higher on heights that none but she may climb
  Abides above all shock of change-born chance
Where hope and memory hear the stars keep chime.

The strong and sunbright lie whose name was France
Arose against the sun of truth, whose glance
  Laughed large from the eyes of England, fierce
    as fire
Whence eyes wax blind that gaze on truth askance.

A name above all names of heroes, higher
Than song may sound or heart of man aspire,
  Rings as the very voice that speaks the sea
To-day from all the sea's enkindling lyre.

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

The sound that bids the soul of silence be
Fire, and a rapturous music, speaks, and we
  Hear what the sea's heart utters, wide and far:
"This was his day, and this day's light was he."

O sea, our sea that hadst him for thy star,
A hundred years that fall upon thee are
  Even as a hundred flakes of rain or snow:
No storm of battle signs thee with a scar.

But never more may ship that sails thee show,
But never may the sun that loves thee know,
  But never may thine England give thee more,
A man whose life and death shall praise thee so.

The Nile, the sea, the battle, and the shore,
Heard as we hear one word arise and soar,
  Beheld one name above them tower and glow—
Nelson: a light that time bows down before.

TRAFALGAR DAY

Sea, that art ours as we are thine, whose name
Is one with England's even as light with flame,
  Dost thou as we, thy chosen of all men, know
This day of days when death gave life to fame?

Dost thou not kindle above and thrill below
With rapturous record, with memorial glow,
  Remembering this thy festal day of fight,
And all the joy it gave, and all the woe?

Never since day broke flowerlike forth of night
Broke such a dawn of battle. Death in sight
  Made of the man whose life was like the sun
A man more godlike than the lord of light.

There is none like him, and there shall be none.
When England bears again as great a son,
  He can but follow fame where Nelson led.
There is not and there cannot be but one.

As earth has but one England, crown and head
Of all her glories till the sun be dead,
  Supreme in peace and war, supreme in song,
Supreme in freedom, since her rede was read,

TRAFALGAR DAY

Since first the soul that gave her speech grew strong
To help the right and heal the wild world's wrong,
  So she hath but one royal Nelson, born
To reign on time above the years that throng.

The music of his name puts fear to scorn,
And thrills our twilight through with sense of morn:
  As England was, how should not England be?
No tempest yet has left her banner torn.

No year has yet put out the day when he
Who lived and died to keep our kingship free
  Wherever seas by warring winds are worn
Died, and was one with England and the sea.

October 21, 1895.

CROMWELL'S STATUE[1]

WHAT needs our Cromwell stone or bronze to say
His was the light that lit on England's way
  The sundawn of her time-compelling power,
The noontide of her most imperial day?

His hand won back the sea for England's dower;
His footfall bade the Moor change heart and cower;
  His word on Milton's tongue spake law to France
When Piedmont felt the she-wolf Rome devour.

From Cromwell's eyes the light of England's glance
Flashed, and bowed down the kings by grace of chance,
  The priest-anointed princes; one alone
By grace of England held their hosts in trance.

The enthroned Republic from her kinglier throne
Spake, and her speech was Cromwell's. Earth has known
  No lordlier presence. How should Cromwell stand
With kinglets and with queenlings hewn in stone?

[1] Refused by the party of reaction and disunion in the House of Commons on the 17th of June, 1895.

CROMWELL'S STATUE

Incarnate England in his warrior hand
Smote, and as fire devours the blackening brand
  Made ashes of their strengths who wrought her wrong,
And turned the strongholds of her foes to sand.

His praise is in the sea's and Milton's song;
What praise could reach him from the weakling throng
  That rules by leave of tongues whose praise is shame—
Him, who made England out of weakness strong?

There needs no clarion's blast of broad-blown fame
To bid the world bear witness whence he came
  Who bade fierce Europe fawn at England's heel
And purged the plague of lineal rule with flame.

There needs no witness graven on stone or steel
For one whose work bids fame bow down and kneel;
  Our man of men, whose time-commanding name
Speaks England, and proclaims her Commonweal.

June 20, 1895.

A WORD FOR THE NAVY

I

Queen born of the sea, that hast borne her
The mightiest of seamen on earth,
Bright England, whose glories adorn her
And bid her rejoice in thy birth
As others made mothers
Rejoice in births sublime,
She names thee, she claims thee,
The lordliest child of time.

II

All hers is the praise of thy story,
All thine is the love of her choice:
The light of her waves is thy glory,
The sound of thy soul is her voice.
They fear it who hear it
And love not truth nor thee:
They sicken, heart-stricken,
Who see and would not see.

III

The lords of thy fate, and thy keepers
  Whose charge is the strength of thy ships,
If now they be dreamers and sleepers,
  Or sluggards with lies at their lips,
    Thy haters and traitors,
      False friends or foes descried,
    Might scatter and shatter
      Too soon thy princely pride.

IV

Dark Muscovy, reptile in rancour,
  Base Germany, blatant in guile,
Lay wait for thee riding at anchor
  On waters that whisper and smile.
    They deem thee or dream thee
      Less living now than dead,
    Deep sunken and drunken
      With sleep whence fear has fled.

V

And what though thy song as thine action
  Wax faint, and thy place be not known
While faction is grappling with faction,
  Twin curs with thy corpse for a bone?
    They care not, who spare not
      The noise of pens or throats;
    Who bluster and muster
      Blind ranks and bellowing votes.

VI

Let populace jangle with peerage
And ministers shuffle their mobs;
Mad pilots who reck not of steerage
Though tempest ahead of them throbs.
That throbbing and sobbing
Of wind and gradual wave
They hear not and fear not
Who guide thee toward thy grave.

VII

No clamour of cries or of parties
Is worth but a whisper from thee,
While only the trust of thy heart is
At one with the soul of the sea.
In justice her trust is
Whose time her tidestreams keep;
They sink not, they shrink not,
Time casts them not on sleep.

VIII

Sleep thou: for thy past was so royal,
Love hardly would bid thee take heed
Were Russia not faithful and loyal
Nor Germany guiltless of greed.
No nation, in station
Of story less than thou,
Re-risen from prison,
Can stand against thee now.

IX

Sleep on: is the time not a season
For strong men to slumber and sleep,
And wise men to palter with treason?
And that they sow tares, shall they reap?
The wages of ages
Wherein men smiled and slept,
Fame fails them, shame veils them,
Their record is not kept.

X

Nay, whence is it then that we know it,
What wages were theirs, and what fame?
Deep voices of prophet and poet
Bear record against them of shame.
Death, starker and darker
Than seals the graveyard grate,
Entombs them and dooms them
To darkness deep as fate.

XI

But thou, though the world should misdoubt thee,
Be strong as the seas at thy side;
Bind on but thine armour about thee,
That girds thee with power and with pride.
Where Drake stood, where Blake stood,
Where fame sees Nelson stand,
Stand thou too, and now too
Take thou thy fate in hand.

A WORD FOR THE NAVY

XII

At the gate of the sea, in the gateway,
They stood as the guards of thy gate;
Take now but thy strengths to thee straightway,
Though late, we will deem it not late.
Thy story, thy glory,
The very soul of thee,
It rose not, it grows not,
It comes not save by sea.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Between our eastward and our westward sea
The narrowing strand
Clasps close the noblest shore fame holds in fee
Even here where English birth seals all men free—
Northumberland.

The sea-mists meet across it when the snow
Clothes moor and fell,
And bid their true-born hearts who love it glow
For joy that none less nobly born may know
What love knows well.

The splendour and the strength of storm and fight
Sustain the song
That filled our fathers' hearts with joy to smite,
To live, to love, to lay down life that right
Might tread down wrong.

They warred, they sang, they triumphed, and they passed,
And left us glad
Here to be born, their sons, whose hearts hold fast
The proud old love no change can overcast,
No chance leave sad.

None save our northmen ever, none but we,
Met, pledged, or fought
Such foes and friends as Scotland and the sea
With heart so high and equal, strong in glee
And stern in thought.

Thought, fed from time's memorial springs with pride,
Made strong as fire
Their hearts who hurled the foe down Flodden side,
And hers who rode the waves none else durst ride—
None save her sire.

O land beloved, where nought of legend's dream
Outshines the truth,
Where Joyous Gard, closed round with clouds that gleam
For them that know thee not, can scarce but seem
Too sweet for sooth,

Thy sons forget not, nor shall fame forget,
The deed there done
Before the walls whose fabled fame is yet
A light too sweet and strong to rise and set
With moon and sun.

Song bright as flash of swords or oars that shine
Through fight or foam
Stirs yet the blood thou hast given thy sons like wine
To hail in each bright ballad hailed as thine
One heart, one home.

Our Collingwood, though Nelson be not ours,
By him shall stand
Immortal, till those waifs of oldworld hours,
Forgotten, leave uncrowned with bays and flowers
Northumberland.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

JUNE 27, 1901

BE glad in heaven above all souls insphered,
Most royal and most loyal born of men,
Shakespeare, of all on earth beloved or feared
Or worshipped, highest in sight of human ken.
The homestead hallowed by thy sovereign birth,
Whose name, being one with thine, stands higher
than Rome,
Forgets not how of all on English earth
Their trust is holiest, there who have their home.
Stratford is thine and England's. None that hate
The commonweal whose empire sets men free
Find comfort there, where once by grace of fate
A soul was born as boundless as the sea.
If life, if love, if memory now be thine,
Rejoice that still thy Stratford bears thy sign.

BURNS: AN ODE

A FIRE of fierce and laughing light
That clove the shuddering heart of night
Leapt earthward, and the thunder's might
That pants and yearns
Made fitful music round its flight:
And earth saw Burns.

The joyous lightning found its voice
And bade the heart of wrath rejoice
And scorn uplift a song to voice
The imperial hate
That smote the God of base men's choice
At God's own gate.

Before the shrine of dawn, wherethrough
The lark rang rapture as she flew,
It flashed and fired the darkling dew:
And all that heard
With love or loathing hailed anew
A new day's word.

The servants of the lord of hell,
As though their lord had blessed them, fell

Foaming at mouth for fear, so well
They knew the lie
Wherewith they sought to scan and spell
The unsounded sky.

And Calvin, night's prophetic bird,
Out of his home in hell was heard
Shrieking; and all the fens were stirred
Whence plague is bred;
Can God endure the scoffer's word?
But God was dead.

The God they made them in despite
Of man and woman, love and light,
Strong sundawn and the starry night,
The lie supreme,
Shot through with song, stood forth to sight
A devil's dream.

And he that bent the lyric bow
And laid the lord of darkness low
And bade the fire of laughter glow
Across his grave,
And bade the tides above it flow,
Wave hurtling wave,

Shall he not win from latter days
More than his own could yield of praise?
Ay, could the sovereign singer's bays
Forsake his brow,
The warrior's, won on stormier ways
Still clasp it now.

He loved, and sang of love: he laughed,
And bade the cup whereout he quaffed
Shine as a planet, fore and aft,
    And left and right,
And keen as shoots the sun's first shaft
    Against the night.

But love and wine were moon and sun
For many a fame long since undone,
And sorrow and joy have lost and won
    By stormy turns
As many a singer's soul, if none
    More bright than Burns.

And sweeter far in grief or mirth
Have songs as glad and sad of birth
Found voice to speak of wealth or dearth
    In joy of life:
But never song took fire from earth
    More strong for strife.

The daisy by his ploughshare cleft,
The lips of women loved and left,
The griefs and joys that weave the weft
    Of human time,
With craftsman's cunning, keen and deft,
    He carved in rhyme.

But Chaucer's daisy shines a star
Above his ploughshare's reach to mar,

And mightier vision gave Dunbar
More strenuous wing
To hear around all sins that are
Hell dance and sing.

And when such pride and power of trust
In song's high gift to arouse from dust
Death, and transfigure love or lust
Through smiles or tears
In golden speech that takes no rust
From cankering years,

As never spake but once in one
Strong star-crossed child of earth and sun,
Villon, made music such as none
May praise or blame,
A crown of starrier flower was won
Than Burns may claim.

But never, since bright earth was born
In rapture of the enkindling morn,
Might godlike wrath and sunlike scorn
That was and is
And shall be while false weeds are worn
Find word like his.

Above the rude and radiant earth
That heaves and glows from firth to firth
In vale and mountain, bright in dearth
And warm in wealth,
Which gave his fiery glory birth
By chance and stealth,

BURNS: AN ODE

Above the storms of praise and blame
That blur with mist his lustrous name,
His thunderous laughter went and came,
    And lives and flies;
The roar that follows on the flame
    When lightning dies.

Earth, and the snow-dimmed heights of air,
And water winding soft and fair
Through still sweet places, bright and bare,
    By bent and byre,
Taught him what hearts within them were:
    But his was fire.

THE COMMONWEAL

A Song for Unionists

Men, whose fathers braved the world in arms against
our isles in union,
Men, whose brothers met rebellion face to face,
Show the hearts ye have, if worthy long descent and
high communion,
Show the spirits, if unbroken, of your race.

What are these that howl and hiss across the strait
of westward water?
What is he who floods our ears with speech in
flood?
See the long tongue lick the dripping hand that
smokes and reeks of slaughter!
See the man of words embrace the man of blood!

Hear the plea whereby the tonguester mocks and
charms the gazing gaper—
"We are they whose works are works of love and
peace;
Till disunion bring forth union, what is union, sirs,
but paper?
Break and rend it, then shall trust and strength
increase."

Who would fear to trust a double-faced but single-hearted dreamer,
Pure of purpose, clean of hand, and clear of guile?
"Life is well-nigh spent," he sighs; "you call me shuffler, trickster, schemer?
I am old—when young men yell at me, I smile."

Many a year that priceless light of life has trembled, we remember,
On the platform of extinction—unextinct;
Many a month has been for him the long year's last —life's calm December:
Can it be that he who said so, saying so, winked?

No; the lust of life, the thirst for work and days with work to do in,
Drove and drives him down the road of splendid shame;
All is well, if o'er the monument recording England's ruin
Time shall read, inscribed in triumph, Gladstone's name.

Thieves and murderers, hands yet red with blood and tongues yet black with lies,
Clap and clamour—"Parnell spurs his Gladstone well!"
Truth, unscared and undeluded by their praise or blame, replies—
"Is the goal of fraud and bloodshed heaven or hell?"

Old men eloquent, who truckle to the traitors of the time,
Love not office—power is no desire of theirs:
What if yesterday their hearts recoiled from blood and fraud and crime?
Conscience erred—an error which to-day repairs.

Conscience only now convinces them of strange though transient error:
Only now they see how fair is treason's face;
See how true the falsehood, just the theft, and blameless is the terror,
Which replaces just and blameless men in place.

Place and time decide the right and wrong of thought and word and action;
Crime is black as hell, till virtue gain its vote;
Then—but ah, to think or say so smacks of fraud or smells of faction!—
Mercy holds the door while Murder hacks the throat.

Murder? Treason? Theft? Poor brothers who succumb to such temptations,
Shall we lay on you or take on us the blame?
Reason answers, and religion echoes round to wondering nations,
"Not with Ireland, but with England rests the shame."

Reason speaks through mild religion's organ, loud and long and lusty—
Profit speaks through lips of patriots pure and true—

"English friends, whose trust we ask for, has not
England found us trusty?
Not for us we seek advancement, but for you.

"Far and near the world bears witness of our wisdom, courage, honour;
Egypt knows if there our fame burns bright or dim.
Let but England trust as Gordon trusted, soon shall come upon her
Such deliverance as our daring brought on him.

"Far and wide the world rings record of our faith, our constant dealing,
Love of country, truth to friends, contempt for foes.
Sign once more the bond of trust in us that here awaits but sealing,
We will give yet more than all our record shows.

"Perfect ruin, shame eternal, everlasting degradation,
Freedom bought and sold, truth bound and treason free."
Yet an hour is here for answer; now, if here be yet a nation,
Answer, England, man by man from sea to sea!

June 30, 1886.

THE QUESTION

1887

Shall England consummate the crime
That binds the murderer's hand, and leaves
No surety for the trust of thieves?
Time pleads against it—truth and time—
And pity frowns and grieves.

The hoary henchman of the gang
Lifts hands that never dew nor rain
May cleanse from Gordon's blood again,
Appealing: pity's tenderest pang
Thrills his pure heart with pain.

Grand helmsman of the clamorous crew,
The good grey recreant quakes and weeps
To think that crime no longer creeps
Safe toward its end: that murderers too
May die when mercy sleeps.

While all the lives were innocent
That slaughter drank, and laughed with rage,
Bland virtue sighed, "A former age
Taught murder: souls long discontent
Can aught save blood assuage?

"You blame not Russian hands that smite
By fierce and secret ways the power
That leaves not life one chainless hour;
Have these than they less natural right
To claim life's natural dower?

"The dower that freedom brings the slave
She weds, is vengeance: why should we,
Whom equal laws acclaim as free,
Think shame, if men too blindly brave
Steal, murder, skulk, and flee?

"At kings they strike in Russia: there
Men take their life in hand who slay
Kings: these, that have not heart to lay
Hand save on girls whose ravaged hair
Is made the patriot's prey,

"These, whom the sight of old men slain
Makes bold to bid their children die,
Starved, if they hold not peace, nor lie,
Claim loftier praise: could others deign
To stand in shame so high?

"Could others deign to dare such deeds
As holiest Ireland hallows? Nay,
But justice then makes plain our way:
Be laws burnt up like burning weeds
That vex the face of day.

"Shall bloodmongers be held of us
  Blood-guilty? Hands reached out for gold
  Whereon blood rusts not yet, we hold
Bloodless and blameless: ever thus
  Have good men held of old.

"Fair Freedom, fledged and imped with lies,
  Takes flight by night where murder lurks,
  And broods on murderous ways and works,
Yet seems not hideous in our eyes
  As Austrians or as Turks.

"Be it ours to undo a woful past,
  To bid the bells of concord chime,
  To break the bonds of suffering crime,
Slack now, that some would make more fast
  Such teaching comes of time."

So pleads the gentlest heart that lives,
  Whose pity, pitiless for all
  Whom darkling terror holds in thrall,
Toward none save miscreants yearns, and gives
  Alms of warm tears—and gall.

Hear, England, and obey: for he
  Who claims thy trust again to-day
  Is he who left thy sons a prey
To shame whence only death sets free:
  Hear, England, and obey.

Thy spoils he gave to deck the Dutch;
  Thy noblest pride, most pure, most brave,
  To death forlorn and sure he gave;
Nor now requires he overmuch
  Who bids thee dig thy grave.

Dig deep the grave of shame, wherein
  Thy fame, thy commonweal, must lie;
  Put thought of aught save terror by;
To strike and slay the slayer is sin;
  And Murder must not die.

Bind fast the true man; loose the thief;
  Shamed were the land, the laws accursed,
  Were guilt, not innocence, amerced;
And dark the wrong and sore the grief,
  Were tyrants too coerced.

The fiercest cowards that ever skulked,
  The cowardliest hounds that ever lapped
  Blood, if their horde be tracked and trapped,
And justice claim their lives for mulct,
  Gnash teeth that flashed and snapped.

Bow down for fear, then, England: bow,
  Lest worse befall thee yet; and swear
  That nought save pity, conscience, care
For truth and mercy, moves thee now
  To call foul falsehood fair.

So shalt thou live in shame, and hear
The lips of all men laugh thee dead;
  The wide world's mockery round thy head
Shriek like a storm-wind: and a bier
  Shall be thine honour's bed.

APOSTASY

Et Judas m'a dit: Traître!—Victor Hugo

I

Truths change with time, and terms with truth. To-day
A statesman worships union, and to-night
Disunion. Shame to have sinned against the light
Confounds not but impels his tongue to unsay
What yestereve he swore. Should fear make way
For treason? honour change her livery? fright
Clasp hands with interest? wrong pledge faith with right?
Religion, mercy, conscience, answer—Yea.

To veer is not to veer: when votes are weighed,
The numerous tongue approves him renegade
Who cannot change his banner: he that can
Sits crowned with wreaths of praise too pure to fade.
Truth smiles applause on treason's poisonous plan:
And Cleon is an honourable man.

II

Pure faith, fond hope, sweet love, with God for guide,
Move now the men whose blameless error cast
In prison (ah, but love condones the past!)
Their subject knaves that were—their lords that ride
Now laughing on their necks, and now bestride
Their vassal backs in triumph. Faith stands fast
Though fear haul down the flag that crowned her mast
And hope and love proclaim that truth has lied.

Turn, turn, and turn—so bids the still small voice,
The changeless voice of honour. He that stands
Where all his life he stood, with bribeless hands,
With tongue unhired to mourn, reprove, rejoice,
Curse, bless, forswear, and swear again, and lie,
Stands proven apostate in the apostate's eye.

III

Fraud shrinks from faith: at sight of swans, the raven
Chides blackness, and the snake recoils aghast
In fear of poison when a bird flies past.
Thersites brands Achilles as a craven;
The shoal fed full with shipwreck blames the haven
For murderous lust of lives devoured, and vast
Desire of doom whose feast is mercy's fast:
And Bacon sees the traitor's mark engraven

Full on the front of Essex. Grief and shame
Obscure the chaste and sunlike spirit of Oates
At thought of Russell's treason; and the name
Of Milton sickens with superb disgust
The heaving heart of Waller. Wisdom dotes,
If wisdom turns not tail and licks not dust.

IV

The sole sweet land found fit to wed the sea,
With reptile rebels at her heel of old,
Set hard her heel upon them, and controlled
The cowering poisonous peril. How should she
Cower, and resign her trust of empire? Free
As winds and waters live the loyal-souled
And true-born sons that love her; nay, the bold
Base knaves who curse her name have leave to be
The loud-tongued liars they are. For she, beyond
All woful years that bid men's hearts despond,
Sees yet the likeness of her ancient fame
Burn from the heavenward heights of history, hears
Not Leicester's name but Sidney's — faith's, not
fear's—
Not Gladstone's now but only Gordon's name.

RUSSIA: AN ODE

1890

I

Out of hell a word comes hissing, dark as doom,
Fierce as fire, and foul as plague-polluted gloom;
Out of hell wherein the sinless damned endure
More than ever sin conceived of pains impure;
More than ever ground men's living souls to dust;
Worse than madness ever dreamed of murderous lust.
Since the world's wail first went up from lands and seas
Ears have heard not, tongues have told not things like these.
Dante, led by love's and hate's accordant spell
Down the deepest and the loathliest ways of hell,
Where beyond the brook of blood the rain was fire,
Where the scalps were masked with dung more deep than mire,
Saw not, where the filth was foulest, and the night
Darkest, depths whose fiends could match the Muscovite.
Set beside this truth, his deadliest vision seems
Pale and pure and painless as a virgin's dreams.

Maidens dead beneath the clasping lash, and wives
Rent with deadlier pangs than death—for shame survives,
Naked, mad, starved, scourged, spurned, frozen, fallen, deflowered,
Souls and bodies as by fangs of beasts devoured,
Sounds that hell would hear not, sights no thought could shape,
Limbs that fell as flame the ravenous grasp of rape,
Filth of raging crime and shame that crime enjoys,
Age made one with youth in torture, girls with boys,
These, and worse if aught be worse than these things are,
Prove thee regent, Russia—praise thy mercy, Czar.

II

Sons of man, men born of women, may we dare
Say they sin who dare be slain and dare not spare?
They who take their lives in hand and smile on death,
Holding life as less than sleep's most fitful breath,
So their life perchance or death may serve and speed
Faith and hope, that die if dream become not deed?
Nought is death and nought is life and nought is fate
Save for souls that love has clothed with fire of hate.
These behold them, weigh them, prove them, find them nought,
Save by light of hope and fire of burning thought.

What though sun be less than storm where these
aspire,
Dawn than lightning, song than thunder, light than
fire?
Help is none in heaven: hope sees no gentler star:
Earth is hell, and hell bows down before the Czar.
All its monstrous, murderous, lecherous births ac-
claim
Him whose empire lives to match its fiery fame.
Nay, perchance at sight or sense of deeds here
done,
Here where men may lift up eyes to greet the sun,
Hell recoils heart-stricken: horror worse than hell
Darkens earth and sickens heaven; life knows the
spell,
Shudders, quails, and sinks—or, filled with fierier
breath,
Rises red in arms devised of darkling death.
Pity mad with passion, anguish mad with shame,
Call aloud on justice by her darker name;
Love grows hate for love's sake; life takes death for
guide.
Night hath none but one red star—Tyrannicide.

III

"God or man, be swift; hope sickens with delay:
Smite, and send him howling down his father's
way!
Fall, O fire of heaven, and smite as fire from hell
Halls wherein men's torturers, crowned and cower-
ing, dwell!

These that crouch and shrink and shudder, girt with power—
These that reign, and dare not trust one trembling hour—
These omnipotent, whom terror curbs and drives—
These whose life reflects in fear their victims' lives—
These whose breath sheds poison worse than plague's thick breath—
These whose reign is ruin, these whose word is death,
These whose will turns heaven to hell, and day to night,
These, if God's hand smite not, how shall man's not smite?"
So from hearts by horror withered as by fire
Surge the strains of unappeasable desire;
Sounds that bid the darkness lighten, lit for death;
Bid the lips whose breath was doom yield up their breath;
Down the way of Czars, awhile in vain deferred,
Bid the Second Alexander light the Third.
How for shame shall men rebuke them? how may we
Blame, whose fathers died, and slew, to leave us free?
We, though all the world cry out upon them, know,
Were our strife as theirs, we could not strike but so;
Could not cower, and could not kiss the hands that smite;
Could not meet them armed in sunlit battle's light.
Dark as fear and red as hate though morning rise,
Life it is that conquers; death it is that dies.

FOR GREECE AND CRETE

Storm and shame and fraud and darkness fill the nations full with night:
Hope and fear whose eyes yearn eastward have but fire and sword in sight:
One alone, whose name is one with glory, sees and seeks the light.

Hellas, mother of the spirit, sole supreme in war and peace,
Land of light, whose word remembered bids all fear and sorrow cease,
Lives again, while freedom lightens eastward yet for sons of Greece.

Greece, where only men whose manhood was as godhead ever trod,
Bears the blind world witness yet of light wherewith her feet are shod:
Freedom, armed of Greece, was always very man and very God.

FOR GREECE AND CRETE

Now the winds of old that filled her sails with triumph, when the fleet
Bound for death from Asia fled before them stricken, wake to greet
Ships full-winged again for freedom toward the sacred shores of Crete.

There was God born man, the song that spake of old time said: and there
Man, made even as God by trust that shows him nought too dire to dare,
Now may light again the beacon lit when those we worship were.

Sharp the concert wrought of discord shrills the tune of shame and death,
Turk by Christian fenced and fostered, Mecca backed by Nazareth:
All the powerless powers, tongue-valiant, breathe but greed's or terror's breath.

Though the tide that feels the west wind lift it wave by widening wave
Wax not yet to height and fullness of the storm that smites to save,
None shall bid the flood back seaward till no bar be left to brave.

DELPHIC HYMN TO APOLLO

(B.C. 280)

DONE INTO ENGLISH

I

Thee, the son of God most high,
Famed for harping song, will I
Proclaim, and the deathless oracular word
From the snow-topped rock that we gaze on heard,
Counsels of thy glorious giving
Manifest for all men living,
How thou madest the tripod of prophecy thine
Which the wrath of the dragon kept guard on, a shrine
Voiceless till thy shafts could smite
All his live coiled glittering might.

II

Ye that hold of right alone
All deep woods on Helicon,
Fair daughters of thunder-girt God, with your bright
White arms uplift as to lighten the light,
Come to chant your brother's praise,
Gold-haired Phœbus, loud in lays,

Even his, who afar up the twin-topped seat
Of the rock Parnassian whereon we meet
Risen with glorious Delphic maids
Seeks the soft spring-sweetened shades
Castalian, fain of the Delphian peak
Prophetic, sublime as the feet that seek.
Glorious Athens, highest of state,
Come, with praise and prayer elate,
O thou that art queen of the plain unscarred
That the warrior Tritonid hath alway in guard,
Where on many a sacred shrine
Young bulls' thigh-bones burn and shine
As the god that is fire overtakes them, and fast
The smoke of Arabia to heavenward is cast,
Scattering wide its balm: and shrill
Now with nimble notes that thrill
The flute strikes up for the song, and the harp of gold
Strikes up to the song sweet answer: and all behold,
All, aswarm as bees, give ear,
Who by birth hold Athens dear.

A NEW CENTURY

An age too great for thought of ours to scan,
A wave upon the sleepless sea of time
That sinks and sleeps for ever, ere the chime
Pass that salutes with blessing, not with ban,
The dark year dead, the bright year born for man,
Dies: all its days that watched man cower and climb,
Frail as the foam, and as the sun sublime,
Sleep sound as they that slept ere these began.

Our mother earth, whose ages none may tell,
Puts on no change: time bids not her wax pale
Or kindle, quenched or quickened, when the knell
Sounds, and we cry across the veering gale
Farewell—and midnight answers us, Farewell;
Hail—and the heaven of morning answers, Hail.

AN EVENING AT VICHY

SEPTEMBER 1896

WRITTEN ON THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF LORD LEIGHTON

A LIGHT has passed that never shall pass away,
A sun has set whose rays are unquelled of night.
The loyal grace, the courtesy bright as day,
The strong sweet radiant spirit of life and light
That shone and smiled and lightened on all men's sight,
The kindly life whose tune was the tune of May,
For us now dark, for love and for fame is bright.

Nay, not for us that live as the fen-fires live,
As stars that shoot and shudder with life and die,
Can death make dark that lustre of life, or give
The grievous gift of trust in oblivion's lie.
Days dear and far death touches, and draws them nigh,
And bids the grief that broods on their graves forgive
The day that seems to mock them as clouds that fly.

If life be life more faithful than shines on sleep
When dreams take wing and lighten and fade like flame,
Then haply death may be not a death so deep
That all things past are past for it wholly—fame,
Love, loving-kindness, seasons that went and came,
And left their light on life as a seal to keep
Winged memory fast and heedful of time's dead claim.

Death gives back life and light to the sunless years
Whose suns long sunken set not for ever. Time,
Blind, fierce, and deaf as tempest, relents, and hears
And sees how bright the days and how sweet their chime
Rang, shone, and passed in music that matched the clime
Wherein we met rejoicing—a joy that cheers
Sorrow, to see the night as the dawn sublime

The days that were outlighten the days that are,
And eyes now darkened shine as the stars we see
And hear not sing, impassionate star to star,
As once we heard the music that haply he
Hears, high in heaven if ever a voice may be
The same in heaven, the same as on earth, afar
From pain and earth as heaven from the heaving sea.

A woman's voice, divine as a bird's by dawn
Kindled and stirred to sunward, arose and held

Our souls that heard, from earth as from sleep withdrawn,
And filled with light as stars, and as stars compelled
To move by might of music, elate while quelled,
Subdued by rapture, lit as a mountain lawn
By morning whence all heaven in the sunrise welled.

And her the shadow of death as a robe clasped round
Then: and as morning's music she passed away.
And he then with us, warrior and wanderer, crowned
With fame that shone from eastern on western day,
More strong, more kind, than praise or than grief might say,
Has passed now forth of shadow by sunlight bound,
Of night shot through with light that is frail as May.

May dies, and light grows darkness, and life grows death:
Hope fades and shrinks and falls as a changing leaf:
Remembrance, touched and kindled by love's live breath,
Shines, and subdues the shadow of time called grief,
The shade whose length of life is as life's date brief,

With joy that broods on the sunlight past, and saith
That thought and love hold sorrow and change
in fief.

Sweet, glad, bright spirit, kind as the sun seems
kind
When earth and sea rejoice in his gentler spell,
Thy face that was we see not: bereft and blind,
We see but yet, rejoicing to see, and dwell
Awhile in days that heard not the death-day's
knell,
A light so bright that scarcely may sorrow find
One old sweet word that hails thee and mourns—
Farewell.

TO GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS

ON THE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH, FEBRUARY 23, 1897

High thought and hallowed love, by faith made one,
Begat and bare the sweet strong-hearted child,
Art, nursed of Nature; earth and sea and sun
Saw Nature then more godlike as she smiled.
Life smiled on death, and death on life: the Soul
Between them shone, and soared above their strife,
And left on Time's unclosed and starry scroll
A sign that quickened death to deathless life.
Peace rose like Hope, a patient queen, and bade
Hell's firstborn, Faith, abjure her creed and die;
And Love, by life and death made sad and glad,
Gave Conscience ease, and watched Good Will pass by.
All these make music now of one man's name,
Whose life and age are one with love and fame.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. LYNN LINTON

Kind, wise, and true as truth's own heart,
A soul that here
Chose and held fast the better part
And cast out fear,

Has left us ere we dreamed of death
For life so strong,
Clear as the sundawn's light and breath,
And sweet as song.

We see no more what here awhile
Shed light on men:
Has Landor seen that brave bright smile
Alive again?

If death and life and love be one
And hope no lie
And night no stronger than the sun,
These cannot die.

The father-spirit whence her soul
Took strength, and gave
Back love, is perfect yet and whole,
As hope might crave.

His word is living light and fire:
And hers shall live
By grace of all good gifts the sire
Gave power to give.

The sire and daughter, twain and one
In quest and goal,
Stand face to face beyond the sun,
And soul to soul.

Not we, who loved them well, may dream
What joy sublime
Is theirs, if dawn through darkness gleam,
And life through time.

Time seems but here the mask of death,
That falls and shows
A void where hope may draw not breath:
Night only knows.

Love knows not: all that love may keep
Glad memory gives:
The spirit of the days that sleep
Still wakes and lives.

But not the spirit's self, though song
Would lend it speech,
May touch the goal that hope might long
In vain to reach.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. LYNN LINTON

How dear that high true heart, how sweet
Those keen kind eyes,
Love knows, who knows how fiery fleet
Is life that flies.

If life there be that flies not, fair
The life must be
That thrills her sovereign spirit there
And sets it free.

IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

Beloved above all nations, land adored,
Sovereign in spirit and charm, by song and sword,
  Sovereign whose life is love, whose name is light,
Italia, queen that hast the sun for lord,

Bride that hast heaven for bridegroom, how should
      night
Veil or withhold from faith's and memory's sight
  A man beloved and crowned of thee and fame,
Hide for an hour his name's memorial might?

Thy sons may never speak or hear the name
Saffi, and feel not love's regenerate flame
  Thrill all the quickening heart with faith and
      pride
In one whose life makes death and life the same.

They die indeed whose souls before them died:
Not he, for whom death flung life's portal wide,
  Who stands where Dante's soul in vision came,
In Dante's presence, by Mazzini's side.

March 26, 1896.

CARNOT

Death, winged with fire of hate from deathless hell
  Wherein the souls of anarchs hiss and die,
  With stroke as dire has cloven a heart as high
As twice beyond the wide sea's westward swell
The living lust of death had power to quell
  Through ministry of murderous hands whereby
  Dark fate bade Lincoln's head and Garfield's lie
Low even as his who bids his France farewell.

France, now no heart that would not weep with thee
  Loved ever faith or freedom. From thy hand
  The staff of state is broken: hope, unmanned
With anguish, doubts if freedom's self be free.
  The snake-souled anarch's fang strikes all the land
Cold, and all hearts unsundered by the sea.

June 25, 1894.

AFTER THE VERDICT

France, cloven in twain by fire of hell and hate,
Shamed with the shame of men her meanest born,
Soldier and judge whose names, inscribed for scorn,
Stand vilest on the record writ of fate,
Lies yet not wholly vile who stood so great,
Sees yet not all her praise of old outworn.
Not yet is all her scroll of glory torn,
Or left for utter shame to desecrate.
High souls and constant hearts of faithful men
Sustain her perfect praise with tongue and pen
Indomitable as honour. Storms may toss
And soil her standard ere her bark win home:
But shame falls full upon the Christless cross
Whose brandmark signs the holy hounds of Rome.

September 1899.

THE TRANSVAAL

Patience, long sick to death, is dead. Too long
Have sloth and doubt and treason bidden us be
What Cromwell's England was not, when the sea
To him bore witness given of Blake how strong
She stood, a commonweal that brooked no wrong
From foes less vile than men like wolves set free
Whose war is waged where none may fight or flee—
With women and with weanlings. Speech and song
Lack utterance now for loathing. Scarce we hear
Foul tongues that blacken God's dishonoured name
With prayers turned curses and with praise found shame
Defy the truth whose witness now draws near
To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam,
Down out of life. Strike, England, and strike home.

October 9, 1899.

REVERSE

The wave that breaks against a forward stroke
Beats not the swimmer back, but thrills him through
With joyous trust to win his way anew
Through stronger seas than first upon him broke
And triumphed. England's iron-tempered oak
Shrank not when Europe's might against her grew
Full, and her sun drank up her foes like dew,
And lion-like from sleep her strength awoke.

As bold in fight as bold in breach of trust
We find our foes, and wonder not to find,
Nor grudge them praise whom honour may not bind:
But loathing more intense than speaks disgust
Heaves England's heart, when scorn is bound to greet
Hunters and hounds whose tongues would lick their feet.

November 1, 1899.

THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

Storm, strong with all the bitter heart of hate,
Smote England, now nineteen dark years ago,
As when the tide's full wrath in seaward flow
Smites and bears back the swimmer. Fraud and fate
Were leagued against her: fear was fain to prate
Of honour in dishonour, pride brought low,
And humbleness whence holiness must grow,
And greatness born of shame to be so great.

The winter day that withered hope and pride
Shines now triumphal on the turning tide
That sets once more our trust in freedom free,
That leaves a ruthless and a truthless foe
And all base hopes that hailed his cause laid low,
And England's name a light on land and sea.

February 27, 1900.

ON THE DEATH OF COLONEL BENSON

Northumberland, so proud and sad to-day,
Weep and rejoice, our mother, whom no son
More glorious than this dead and deathless one
Brought ever fame whereon no time shall prey.
Nor heed we more than he what liars dare say
Of mercy's holiest duties left undone
Toward whelps and dams of murderous foes, whom none
Save we had spared or feared to starve and slay.

Alone as Milton and as Wordsworth found
And hailed their England, when from all around
Howled all the recreant hate of envious knaves,
Sublime she stands: while, stifled in the sound,
Each lie that falls from German boors and slaves
Falls but as filth dropt in the wandering waves.

November 4, 1901.

ASTRÆA VICTRIX

England, elect of time,
By freedom sealed sublime,
And constant as the sun that saw thy dawn
Outshine upon the sea
His own in heaven, to be
A light that night nor day should see withdrawn,
If song may speak not now thy praise,
Fame writes it higher than song may soar or faith may gaze.

Dark months on months beheld
Hope thwarted, crossed, and quelled,
And heard the heartless hounds of hatred bay
Aloud against thee, glad
As now their souls are sad
Who see their hope in hatred pass away
And wither into shame and fear
And shudder down to darkness, loth to see or hear.

I

Nought now they hear or see
That speaks or shows not thee
Triumphant; not as empires reared of yore,
The imperial commonweal
That bears thy sovereign seal

And signs thine orient as thy natural shore
Free, as no sons but thine may stand,
Steers lifeward ever, guided of thy pilot hand.

Fear, masked and veiled by fraud,
Found shameful time to applaud
Shame, and bow down thy banner towards the dust,
And call on godly shame
To desecrate thy name
And bid false penitence abjure thy trust:
Till England's heart took thought at last,
And felt her future kindle from her fiery past.

Then sprang the sunbright fire
High as the sun, and higher
Than strange men's eyes might watch it undismayed:
But winds athwart it blew
Storm, and the twilight grew
Darkness awhile, an unenduring shade:
And all base birds and beasts of night
Saw no more England now to fear, no loathsome light.

All knaves and slaves at heart
Who, knowing thee what thou art,
Abhor thee, seeing what none save here may see,
Strong freedom, taintless truth,
Supreme in ageless youth,
Howled all their hate and hope aloud at thee

While yet the wavering wind of strife
Bore hard against her sail whose freight is hope and life.

And now the quickening tide
That brings back power and pride
To faith and love whose ensign is thy name
Bears down the recreant lie
That doomed thy name to die,
Sons, friends, and foes behold thy star the same
As when it stood in heaven a sun
And Europe saw no glory left her sky save one.

And now, as then she saw,
She sees with shamefast awe
How all unlike all slaves and tyrants born
Where bondmen champ the bit
And anarchs foam and flit,
And day mocks day, and year puts year to scorn,
Our mother bore us, English men,
Ashamed of shame and strong in mercy, now as then.

We loosed not on these knaves
Their scourge-tormented slaves:
We held the hand that fain had risen to smite
The torturer fast, and made
Justice awhile afraid,
And righteousness forgo her ruthless right:
We warred not even with these as they;
We bade not them they preyed on make of them their prey.

All murderous fraud that lurks
In hearts where hell's craft works
Fought, crawled, and slew in darkness: they that died
Dreamed not of foes too base
For scorn to grant them grace:
Men wounded, women, children at their side,
Had found what faith in fiends may live:
And yet we gave not back what righteous doom would give.

No false white flag that fawns
On faith till murder dawns
Blood-red from hell-black treason's heart of hate
Left ever shame's foul brand
Seared on an English hand:
And yet our pride vouchsafes them grace too great
For other pride to dream of: scorn
Strikes retribution silent as the stars at morn.

And now the living breath
Whose life puts death to death,
Freedom, whose name is England, stirs and thrills
The burning darkness through
Whence fraud and slavery grew,
We scarce may mourn our dead whose fame fulfils
The record where her foes have read
That earth shall see none like her born ere earth be dead.

THE FIRST OF JUNE

Peace and war are one in proof of England's deathless praise.
One divine day saw her foemen scattered on the sea
Far and fast as storm could speed: the same strong day of days
Sees the imperial commonweal set friends and foemen free.
Save where freedom reigns, whose name is England, fraud and fear
Grind and blind the face of men who look on her and lie:
Now may truth and pride in truth, whose seat of old was here,
See them shamed and stricken blind and dumb as worms that die.
Even before our hallowed hawthorn-blossom pass and cease,
Even as England shines and smiles at last upon the sun,
Comes the word that means for England more than passing peace,
Peace with honour, peace with pride in righteous work well done.

THE FIRST OF JUNE

Crowned with flowers the first of all the world and
all the year,
Peace, whose name is one with honour born of war,
is here.

ROUNDEL

FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLON

Death, I would plead against thy wrong,
  Who hast reft me of my love, my wife,
  And art not satiate yet with strife,
But needs wilt hold me lingering long.
No strength since then has kept me strong:
  But what could hurt thee in her life,
    Death?

Twain we were, and our hearts one song,
  One heart: if that be dead, thy knife
  Hath cut me off alive from life,
Dead as the carver's figured throng,
    Death!

A ROUNDEL OF RABELAIS

THELEME is afar on the waters, adrift and afar,
Afar and afloat on the waters that flicker and gleam,
And we feel but her fragrance and see but the shadows that mar
Theleme.

In the sun-coloured mists of the sunrise and sunset that steam
As incense from urns of the twilight, her portals ajar
Let pass as a shadow the light of the sound of a dream.

But the laughter that rings from her cloisters that know not a bar
So kindles delight in desire that the souls in us deem
He erred not, the seer who discerned on the seas as a star
Theleme.

LUCIFER

Écrasez l'infâme.—VOLTAIRE

Les prêtres ont raison de l'appeler Lucifer.—VICTOR HUGO

VOLTAIRE, our England's lover, man divine
  Beyond all Gods that ever fear adored
  By right and might, by sceptre and by sword,
By godlike love of sunlike truth, made thine
Through godlike hate of falsehood's marshlight shine
  And all the fume of creeds and deeds abhorred
  Whose light was darkness, till the dawn-star soared,
Truth, reason, mercy, justice, keep thy shrine
Sacred in memory's temple, seeing that none
Of all souls born to strive before the sun
  Loved ever good or hated evil more.
The snake that felt thy heel upon her head,
Night's first-born, writhes as though she were not dead,
  But strikes not, stings not, slays not as before.

THE CENTENARY OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Sound of trumpets blowing down the merriest winds of morn,
Flash of hurtless lightnings, laugh of thunders loud and glad,
Here should hail the summer day whereon a light was born
Whence the sun grew brighter, seeing the world less dark and sad.
Man of men by right divine of boyhood everlasting,
France incarnate, France immortal in her deathless boy,
Brighter birthday never shone than thine on earth, forecasting
More of strenuous mirth in manhood, more of manful joy.
Child of warriors, friend of warriors, Garibaldi's friend,
Even thy name is as the splendour of a sunbright sword:
While the boy's heart beats in man, thy fame shall find not end:
Time and dark oblivion bow before thee as their lord.

Youth acclaims thee gladdest of the gods that gild
his days:
Age gives thanks for thee, and death lacks heart to
quench thy praise.

AT A DOG'S GRAVE

I

Good night, we say, when comes the time to win
The daily death divine that shuts up sight,
Sleep, that assures for all who dwell therein
Good night.

The shadow shed round those we love shines bright
As love's own face, when death, sleep's gentler twin,
From them divides us even as night from light.

Shall friends born lower in life, though pure of sin,
Though clothed with love and faith to usward plight,
Perish and pass unbidden of us, their kin,
Good night?

II

To die a dog's death once was held for shame.
Not all men so beloved and mourned shall lie
As many of these, whose time untimely came
To die.

His years were full: his years were joyous: why
Must love be sorrow, when his gracious name
Recalls his lovely life of limb and eye?

AT A DOG'S GRAVE

If aught of blameless life on earth may claim
Life higher than death, though death's dark wave
rise high,
Such life as this among us never came
To die.

III

White violets, there by hands more sweet than they
Planted, shall sweeten April's flowerful air
About a grave that shows to night and day
White violets there.

A child's light hands, whose touch makes flowers
more fair,
Keep fair as these for many a March and May
The light of days that are because they were.

It shall not like a blossom pass away;
It broods and brightens with the days that bear
Fresh fruits of love, but leave, as love might pray,
White violets there.

THREE WEEKS OLD

THREE weeks since there was no such rose in being;
Now may eyes made dim with deep delight
See how fair it is, laugh with love, and seeing
Praise the chance that bids us bless the sight.

Three weeks old, and a very rose of roses,
Bright and sweet as love is sweet and bright.
Heaven and earth, till a man's life wanes and closes,
Show not life or love a lovelier sight.

Three weeks past have renewed the rosebright creature
Day by day with life, and night by night.
Love, though fain of its every faultless feature,
Finds not words to match the silent sight.

A CLASP OF HANDS

I

Soft, small, and sweet as sunniest flowers
That bask in heavenly heat
When bud by bud breaks, breathes, and cowers,
Soft, small, and sweet,

A babe's hands open as to greet
The tender touch of ours
And mock with motion faint and fleet

The minutes of the new strange hours
That earth, not heaven, must mete;
Buds fragrant still from heaven's own bowers,
Soft, small, and sweet.

II

A velvet vice with springs of steel
That fasten in a trice
And clench the fingers fast that feel
A velvet vice—

What man would risk the danger twice,
Nor quake from head to heel?
Whom would not one such test suffice?

Well may we tremble as we kneel
In sight of Paradise,
If both a babe's closed fists conceal
A velvet vice.

III

Two flower-soft fists of conquering clutch,
Two creased and dimpled wrists,
That match, if mottled overmuch,
Two flower-soft fists—

What heart of man dare hold the lists
Against such odds and such
Sweet vantage as no strength resists?

Our strength is all a broken crutch,
Our eyes are dim with mists,
Our hearts are prisoners as we touch
Two flower-soft fists.

PROLOGUE TO DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Light, as when dawn takes wing and smites the sea,
Smote England when his day bade Marlowe be.
No fire so keen had thrilled the clouds of time
Since Dante's breath made Italy sublime.
Earth, bright with flowers whose dew shone soft as tears,
Through Chaucer cast her charm on eyes and ears:
The lustrous laughter of the love-lit earth
Rang, leapt, and lightened in his might of mirth.
Deep moonlight, hallowing all the breathless air,
Made earth and heaven for Spenser faint and fair.
But song might bid not heaven and earth be one
Till Marlowe's voice gave warning of the sun.
Thought quailed and fluttered as a wounded bird
Till passion fledged the wing of Marlowe's word.
Faith born of fear bade hope and doubt be dumb
Till Marlowe's pride bade light or darkness come.
Then first our speech was thunder: then our song
Shot lightning through the clouds that wrought us wrong.
Blind fear, whose faith feeds hell with fire, became
A moth self-shrivelled in its own blind flame.
We heard, in tune with even our seas that roll,
The speech of storm, the thunders of the soul.

PROLOGUE TO DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Men's passions, clothed with all the woes they wrought,
Shone through the fire of man's transfiguring thought.
The thirst of knowledge, quenchless at her springs,
Ambition, fire that clasps the thrones of kings,
Love, light that makes of life one lustrous hour,
And song, the soul's chief crown and throne of power,
The hungering heart of greed and ravenous hate,
Made music high as heaven and deep as fate.
Strange pity, scarce half scornful of her tear,
In Berkeley's vaults bowed down on Edward's bier.
But higher in forceful flight of song than all
The soul of man, its own imperious thrall,
Rose, when his royal spirit of fierce desire
Made life and death for man one flame of fire.
Incarnate man, fast bound as earth and sea,
Spake, when his pride would fain set Faustus free.
Eternal beauty, strong as day and night,
Shone, when his word bade Helen back to sight.
Fear, when he bowed the soul before her spell,
Thundered and lightened through the vaults of hell.
The music known of all men's tongues that sing,
When Marlowe sang, bade love make heaven of spring;
The music none but English tongues may make,
Our own sole song, spake first when Marlowe spake;
And on his grave, though there no stone may stand,
The flower it shows was laid by Shakespeare's hand.

PROLOGUE TO ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM

Love dark as death and fierce as fire on wing
Sustains in sin the soul that feels it cling
Like flame whose tongues are serpents: hope and fear
Die when a love more dire than hate draws near,
And stings to death the heart it cleaves in twain,
And leaves in ashes all but fear and pain.
Our lustrous England rose to life and light
From Rome's and hell's immitigable night,
And music laughed and quickened from her breath,
When first her sons acclaimed Elizabeth.
Her soul became a lyre that all men heard
Who felt their souls give back her lyric word.
Yet now not all at once her perfect power
Spake: man's deep heart abode awhile its hour,
Abode its hour of utterance; not to wake
Till Marlowe's thought in thunderous music spake.
But yet not yet was passion's tragic breath
Thrilled through with sense of instant life and death,
Life actual even as theirs who watched the strife,
Death dark and keen and terrible as life.
Here first was truth in song made perfect: here
Woke first the war of love and hate and fear.
A man too vile for thought's or shame's control
Holds empire on a woman's loftier soul,

And withers it to wickedness: in vain
Shame quickens thought with penitential pain:
In vain dark chance's fitful providence
Withholds the crime, and chills the spirit of sense:
It wakes again in fire that burns away
Repentance, weak as night devoured of day.
Remorse, and ravenous thirst of sin and crime,
Rend and consume the soul in strife sublime,
And passion cries on pity till it hear
And tremble as with love that casts out fear.
Dark as the deed and doom he gave to fame
For ever lies the sovereign singer's name.
Sovereign and regent on the soul he lives
While thought gives thanks for aught remembrance gives,
And mystery sees the imperial shadow stand
By Marlowe's side alone at Shakespeare's hand.

PROLOGUE TO OLD FORTUNATUS

The golden bells of fairyland, that ring
Perpetual chime for childhood's flower-sweet spring,
Sang soft memorial music in his ear
Whose answering music shines about us here.
Soft laughter as of light that stirs the sea
With darkling sense of dawn ere dawn may be,
Kind sorrow, pity touched with gentler scorn,
Keen wit whose shafts were sunshafts of the morn,
Love winged with fancy, fancy thrilled with love,
An eagle's aim and ardour in a dove,
A man's delight and passion in a child,
Inform it as when first they wept and smiled.
Life, soiled and rent and ringed about with pain
Whose touch lent action less of spur than chain,
Left half the happiness his birth designed,
And half the power, unquenched in heart and mind.
Comrade and comforter, sublime in shame,
A poor man bound in prison whence he came
Poor, and took up the burden of his life
Smiling, and strong to strive with sorrow and strife,
He spake in England's ear the poor man's word,
Manful and mournful, deathless and unheard.
His kind great heart was fire, and love's own fire,
Compassion, strong as flesh may feel desire,

PROLOGUE TO OLD FORTUNATUS

To enkindle pity and mercy toward a soul
Sunk down in shame too deep for shame's control,
His kind keen eye was light to lighten hope
Where no man else might see life's darkness ope
And pity's touch bring forth from evil good,
Sweet as forgiveness, strong as fatherhood.
Names higher than his outshine it and outsoar,
But none save one should memory cherish more:
Praise and thanksgiving crown the names above,
But him we give the gift he gave us, love.

PROLOGUE TO THE DUCHESS OF MALFY

When Shakespeare soared from life to death, above
All praise, all adoration, save of love,
As here on earth above all men he stood
That were or are or shall be—great, and good,
Past thank or thought of England or of man—
Light from the sunset quickened as it ran.
His word, who sang as never man may sing
And spake as never voice of man may ring,
Not fruitless fell, as seed on sterile ways,
But brought forth increase even to Shakespeare's praise.
Our skies were thrilled and filled, from sea to sea,
With stars outshining all their suns to be.
No later light of tragic song they knew
Like his whose lightning clove the sunset through.
Half Shakespeare's glory, when his hand sublime
Bade all the change of tragic life and time
Live, and outlive all date of quick and dead,
Fell, rested, and shall rest on Webster's head.
Round him the shadows cast on earth by light
Rose, changed, and shone, transfiguring death and night.
Where evil only crawled and hissed and slew
On ways where nought save shame and bloodshed grew,

He bade the loyal light of honour live,
And love, when stricken through the heart, forgive.
Deep down the midnight of the soul of sin
He lit the star of mercy throned therein.
High up the darkness of sublime despair
He set the sun of love to triumph there.
Things foul or frail his touch made strong and pure,
And bade things transient like to stars endure
Terror, on wings whose flight made night in heaven,
Pity, with hands whence life took love for leaven,
Breathed round him music whence his mortal breath
Drew life that bade forgetfulness and death
Die: life that bids his light of fiery fame
Endure with England's, yea, with Shakespeare's name.

PROLOGUE TO THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

Fire, and behind the breathless flight of fire
Thunder that quickens fear and quells desire,
Make bright and loud the terror of the night
Wherein the soul sees only wrath for light.
Wrath winged by love and sheathed by grief in steel
Sets on the front of crime death's withering seal.
The heaving horror of the storms of sin
Brings forth in fear the lightning hid therein,
And flashes back to darkness: truth, found pure
And perfect, asks not heaven if shame endure.
What life and death were his whose raging song
Bore heaven such witness of the wild world's wrong,
What hand was this that grasped such thunder, none
Knows: night and storm seclude him from the sun.
By daytime none discerns the fire of Mars:
Deep darkness bares to sight the sterner stars,
The lights whose dawn seems doomsday. None may tell
Whence rose a world so lit from heaven and hell.
Life-wasting love, hate born of raging lust,
Fierce retribution, fed with death's own dust
And sorrow's pampering poison, cross and meet,
And wind the world in passion's winding-sheet.

PROLOGUE TO REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

So, when dark faith in faith's dark ages heard
Falsehood, and drank the poison of the Word,
Two shades misshapen came to monstrous birth,
A father fiend in heaven, a thrall on earth:
Man, meanest born of beasts that press the sod,
And die: the vilest of his creatures, God.
A judge unjust, a slave that praised his name,
Made life and death one fire of sin and shame.
And thence reverberate even on Shakespeare's age
A light like darkness crossed his sunbright stage.
Music, sublime as storm or sorrow, sang
Before it: tempest like a harpstring rang.
The fiery shadow of a name unknown
Rose, and in song's high heaven abides alone.

PROLOGUE TO THE BROKEN HEART

The mightiest choir of song that memory hears
Gave England voice for fifty lustrous years.
Sunrise and thunder fired and shook the skies
That saw the sun-god Marlowe's opening eyes.
The morn's own music, answered of the sea,
Spake, when his living lips bade Shakespeare be,
And England, made by Shakespeare's quickening breath
Divine and deathless even till life be death,
Brought forth to time such godlike sons of men
That shamefaced love grows pride, and now seems then.
Shame that their day so shone, so sang, so died,
Remembering, finds remembrance one with pride.
That day was clouding toward a stormlit close
When Ford's red sphere upon the twilight rose.
Sublime with stars and sunset fire, the sky
Glowed as though day, nigh dead, should never die.
Sorrow supreme and strange as chance or doom
Shone, spake, and shuddered through the lustrous gloom.
Tears lit with love made all the darkening air
Bright as though death's dim sunrise thrilled it there

And life re-risen took comfort. Stern and still
As hours and years that change and anguish fill,
The strong secluded spirit, ere it woke,
Dwelt dumb till power possessed it, and it spoke.
Strange, calm, and sure as sense of beast or bird,
Came forth from night the thought that breathed the word;
That chilled and thrilled with passion-stricken breath
Halls where Calantha trod the dance of death.
A strength of soul too passionately pure
To change for aught that horror bids endure,
To quail and wail and weep faint life away
Ere sovereign sorrow smite, relent, and slay,
Sustained her silent, till her bridal bloom
Changed, smiled, and waned in rapture toward the tomb.
Terror twin-born with pity kissed and thrilled
The lips that Shakespeare's word or Webster's filled:
Here both, cast out, fell silent: pity shrank,
Rebuked, and terror, spirit-stricken, sank:
The soul assailed arose afar above
All reach of all but only death and love.

PROLOGUE TO A VERY WOMAN

Swift music made of passion's changeful power,
Sweet as the change that leaves the world in flower
When spring laughs winter down to deathward, rang
From grave and gracious lips that smiled and sang
When Massinger, too wise for kings to hear
And learn of him truth, wisdom, faith, or fear,
Gave all his gentler heart to love's light lore,
That grief might brood and scorn breed wrath no more.
Soft, bright, fierce, tender, fitful, truthful, sweet,
A shrine where faith and change might smile and meet,
A soul whose music could but shift its tune
As when the lustrous year turns May to June
And spring subsides in summer, so makes good
Its perfect claim to very womanhood.
The heart that hate of wrong made fire, the hand
Whose touch was fire as keen as shame's own brand
When fraud and treason, swift to smile and sting,
Crowned and discrowned a tyrant, knave or king,
False each and ravenous as the fitful sea,
Grew gently glad as love that fear sets free.
Like eddying ripples that the wind restrains,
The bright words whisper music ere it wanes.

PROLOGUE TO A VERY WOMAN

Ere fades the sovereign sound of song that rang
As though the sun to match the sea's tune sang,
When noon from dawn took life and light, and time
Shone, seeing how Shakespeare made the world
sublime,
Ere sinks the wind whose breath was heaven's and
day's,
The sunset's witness gives the sundawn praise.

PROLOGUE TO THE SPANISH GIPSY

The wind that brings us from the springtide south
Strange music as from love's or life's own mouth
Blew hither, when the blast of battle ceased
That swept back southward Spanish prince and priest,
A sound more sweet than April's flower-sweet rain,
And bade bright England smile on pardoned Spain.
The land that cast out Philip and his God
Grew gladly subject where Cervantes trod.
Even he whose name above all names on earth
Crowns England queen by grace of Shakespeare's birth
Might scarce have scorned to smile in God's wise down
And gild with praise from heaven an earthlier crown.
And he whose hand bade live down lengthening years
Quixote, a name lit up with smiles and tears,
Gave the glad watchword of the gipsies' life,
Where fear took hope and grief took joy to wife.
Times change, and fame is fitful as the sea:
But sunset bids not darkness always be,

And still some light from Shakespeare and the sun
Burns back the cloud that masks not Middleton.
With strong swift strokes of love and wrath he drew
Shakespearean London's loud and lusty crew:
No plainer might the likeness rise and stand
When Hogarth took his living world in hand.
No surer then his fire-fledged shafts could hit,
Winged with as forceful and as faithful wit:
No truer a tragic depth and heat of heart
Glowed through the painter's than the poet's art.
He lit and hung in heaven the wan fierce moon
Whose glance kept time with witchcraft's air-struck
tune:
He watched the doors where loveless love let in
The pageant hailed and crowned by death and sin:
He bared the souls where love, twin-born with hate,
Made wide the way for passion-fostered fate.
All English-hearted, all his heart arose
To scourge with scorn his England's cowering foes:
And Rome and Spain, who bade their scorner be
Their prisoner, left his heart as England's free.
Now give we all we may of all his due
To one long since thus tried and found thus true.

PROLOGUE TO THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

Sweet as the dewfall, splendid as the south,
Love touched with speech Boccaccio's golden mouth,
Joy thrilled and filled its utterance full with song,
And sorrow smiled on doom that wrought no wrong.
A starrier lustre of lordlier music rose
Beyond the sundering bar of seas and snows
When Chaucer's thought took life and light from his
And England's crown was one with Italy's.
Loftiest and last, by grace of Shakespeare's word,
Arose above their quiring spheres a third,
Arose, and flashed, and faltered: song's deep sky
Saw Shakespeare pass in light, in music die.
No light like his, no music, man might give
To bid the darkened sphere, left songless, live.
Soft though the sound of Fletcher's rose and rang
And lit the lunar darkness as it sang,
Below the singing stars the cloud-crossed moon
Gave back the sunken sun's a trembling tune.
As when at highest high tide the sovereign sea
Pauses, and patience doubts if passion be,
Till gradual ripples ebb, recede, recoil,
Shine, smile, and whisper, laughing as they toil,

PROLOGUE TO TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

Stark silence fell, at turn of fate's high tide,
Upon his broken song when Shakespeare died,
Till Fletcher's light sweet speech took heart to say
What evening, should it speak for morning, may.
And fourfold now the gradual glory shines
That shows once more in heaven two twinborn signs,
Two brethren stars whose light no cloud may fret,
No soul whereon their story dawns forget.

THE AFTERGLOW OF SHAKESPEARE

Let there be light, said Time: and England heard:
And manhood grew to godhead at the word.
No light had shone, since earth arose from sleep,
So far; no fire of thought had cloven so deep.
A day beyond all days bade life acclaim
Shakespeare: and man put on his crowning name.
All secrets once through darkling ages kept
Shone, sang, and smiled to think how long they slept.
Man rose past fear of lies whereon he trod:
And Dante's ghost saw hell devour his God.
Bright Marlowe, brave as winds that brave the sea
When sundawn bids their bliss in battle be,
Lit England first along the ways whereon
Song brighter far than sunlight soared and shone.
He died ere half his life had earned his right
To lighten time with song's triumphant light.
Hope shrank, and felt the stroke at heart: but one
She knew not rose, a man to match the sun.
And England's hope and time's and man's became
Joy, deep as music's heart and keen as flame.
Not long, for heaven on earth may live not long,
Light sang, and darkness died before the song.

He passed, the man above all men, whose breath
Transfigured life with speech that lightens death.
He passed: but yet for many a lustrous year
His light of song bade England shine and hear.
As plague and fire and faith in falsehood spread,
So from the man of men, divine and dead,
Contagious godhead, seen, unknown, and heard,
Fulfilled and quickened England; thought and word,
When men would fain set life to music, grew
More sweet than years which knew not Shakespeare
knew.
The simplest soul that set itself to song
Sang, and may fear not time's or change's wrong.
The lightest eye that glanced on life could see
Through grief and joy the God that man might be.
All passion whence the living soul takes fire
Till death fulfil despair and quench desire,
All love that lightens through the cloud of chance,
All hate that lurks in hope and smites askance,
All holiness of sorrow, all divine
Pity, whose tears are stars that save and shine,
All sunbright strength of laughter like the sea's
When spring and autumn loose their lustrous breeze,
All sweet, all strange, all sad, all glorious things,
Lived on his lips, and hailed him king of kings.
All thought, all strife, all anguish, all delight,
Spake all he bade, and speak till day be night.
No soul that heard, no spirit that beheld,
Knew not the God that lured them and compelled.
On Beaumont's brow the sun arisen afar
Shed fire which lit through heaven the younger
star

That sank before the sunset: one dark spring
Slew first the kinglike subject, then the king.
The glory left above their graves made strong
The heart of Fletcher, till the flower-sweet song
That Shakespeare culled from Chaucer's field, and
died,
Found ending on his lips that smiled and sighed.
From Dekker's eyes the light of tear-touched mirth
Shone as from Shakespeare's, mingling heaven and
earth.
Wild witchcraft's lure and England's love made
one
With Shakespeare's heart the heart of Middleton.
Harsh, homely, true, and tragic, Rowley told
His heart's debt down in rough and radiant gold.
The skies that Tourneur's lightning clove and rent
Flamed through the clouds where Shakespeare's
thunder went.
Wise Massinger bade kings be wise in vain
Ere war bade song, storm-stricken, cower and
wane.
Kind Heywood, simple-souled and single-eyed,
Found voice for England's home-born praise and
pride.
Strange grief, strange love, strange terror, bared the
sword
That smote the soul by grace and will of Ford.
The stern grim strength of Chapman's thought found
speech
Loud as when storm at ebb-tide rends the beach:
And all the honey brewed from flowers in May
Made sweet the lips and bright the dreams of Day.

But even as Shakespeare caught from Marlowe's word
Fire, so from his the thunder-bearing third,
Webster, took light and might whence none but he
Hath since made song that sounded so the sea
Whose waves are lives of men—whose tidestream rolls
From year to darkening year the freight of souls.
Alone above it, sweet, supreme, sublime,
Shakespeare attunes the jarring chords of time;
Alone of all whose doom is death and birth,
Shakespeare is lord of souls alive on earth.

DEDICATION

The sea that is life everlasting
And death everlasting as life
Abides not a pilot's forecasting,
Foretells not of peace or of strife.
The might of the night that was hidden
Arises and darkens the day,
A glory rebuked and forbidden,
Time's crown, and his prey.

No sweeter, no kindlier, no fairer,
No lovelier a soul from its birth
Wore ever a brighter and rarer
Life's raiment for life upon earth
Than his who enkindled and cherished
Art's vestal and luminous flame,
That dies not when kingdoms have perished
In storm or in shame.

No braver, no trustier, no purer,
No stronger and clearer a soul
Bore witness more splendid and surer
For manhood found perfect and whole
Since man was a warrior and dreamer
Than his who in hatred of wrong
Would fain have arisen a redeemer
By sword or by song.

DEDICATION

Twin brethren in spirit, immortal
  As art and as love, which were one
For you from the birthday whose portal
  First gave you to sight of the sun,
To-day nor to-night nor to-morrow
  May bring you again from above,
Drawn down by the spell of the sorrow
  Whose anguish is love.

No light rearising hereafter
  Shall lighten us here as of old
When seasons were lustrous as laughter
  Of waves that are snowshine and gold.
The dawn that imbues and enkindles
  Life's fluctuant and fugitive sea
Dies down as the starshine that dwindles
  And cares not to be.

Men, mightier than death which divides us,
  Friends, dearer than sorrow can say,
The light that is darkness and hides us
  Awhile from each other away
Abides but awhile and endures not,
  We know, though the day be as night,
For souls that forgetfulness lures not
  Till sleep be in sight.

The sleep that enfolds you, the slumber
  Supreme and eternal on earth,
Whence ages of numberless number
  Shall bring us not back into birth,

DEDICATION

We know not indeed if it be not
  What no man hath known if it be,
Life, quickened with light that we see not
  If spirits may see.

The love that would see and would know it
  Is even as the love of a child.
But the fire of the fame of the poet
  Who gazed on the past, and it smiled,
But the light of the fame of the painter
  Whose hand was as morning's in May,
Death bids not be darker or fainter,
  Time casts not away.

We, left of them loveless and lonely,
  Who lived in the light of their love,
Whose darkness desires it, we only,
  Who see them afar and above,
So far, if we die not, above us,
  So lately no dearer than near,
May know not of death if they love us,
  Of night if they hear.

We, stricken and darkling and living,
  Who loved them and love them, abide
A day, and the gift of its giving,
  An hour, and the turn of its tide,
When twilight and midnight and morrow
  Shall pass from the sight of the sun,
And death be forgotten, and sorrow
  Discrowned and undone.

For us as for these will the breathless
  Brief minute arise and pass by:
And if death be not utterly deathless,
  If love do not utterly die,
From the life that is quenched as an ember
  The soul that aspires as a flame
Can choose not but wholly remember
  Love, lovelier than fame.

Though sure be the seal of their glory
  And fairer no fame upon earth,
Though never a leaf shall grow hoary
  Of the crowns that were given them at birth,
While time as a vassal doth duty
  To names that he towers not above,
More perfect in price and in beauty
  For ever is love.

The night is upon us, and anguish
  Of longing that yearns for the dead.
But mourners that faint not or languish,
  That veil not and bow not the head,
Take comfort to heart if a token
  Be given them of comfort to be:
While darkness on earth is unbroken,
  Light lives on the sea.

END OF VOL. VI.

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Swinburne.

Midsummer holiday.
Astrophel and other poems
Channel passage and
other poems.

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